

Agreement reached on Mostar elections

SARAJEVO (R) — Muslim, Croat and Serb representatives averted disaster in the divided city of Mostar on Saturday by signing a final agreement with the city's European Union (EU) administrator to hold local elections next month. A text of the agreement, faxed to Reuters, calls for the poll not later than June 30. Elections originally had been scheduled for the end of May but non-Croat parties in Mostar refused to register because refugees and displaced people driven from their homes during the 43-month Bosnian war would have been unable to vote. The agreement signed on Saturday called for buses to be made available to ensure that refugees and displaced people who want to vote in Mostar can make the trip. It also called for the EU to designate one voting location in each country where the large majority of refugees from Mostar now live, provided those states agree. The countries were identified as Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Analysts said Saturday's agreement appeared to defuse an electoral row which had threatened the uneasy peace between Muslims and Croats in Mostar and cast a shadow over country-wide elections scheduled for September.

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Syrians to remain until Israelis leave - Lebanon

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanon has no intention of asking Syria to withdraw or redeploy its troops stationed in the country while Israel continues to occupy part of South Lebanon, a government report published on Saturday said.

The Syrian troops, estimated to number 35,000, were in Lebanon at the government's invitation under a Lebanese-Syrian treaty of brotherhood, the report said.

"The Lebanese government still needs the help of Syrian troops on its territory to help face the many dangers threatening the country so long as the Israeli occupation does not end and Israeli aggressions continue," the report said.

It was prepared by the Interior Ministry and approved on Wednesday by the cabinet of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri in response to criticisms of Lebanon's political system and human rights stance in an annual U.S. State Department report earlier this year.

"Lebanon has no intention of requesting a redeploy-

ment, not because of the influence that Syria exercises on Lebanese decision-makers as the (U.S.) report alleges, but because the country still needs the help of these troops," the Lebanese report said.

"Lebanon refuses, in addition, to compare the Syrian presence to the Israeli occupation," it added.

Israel has held part of South Lebanon for 18 years. At present, some 1,000 Israeli troops hold a border strip totalling about 10 per cent of Lebanese territory, officially in order to ward off guerrilla attacks on northern Israel.

The Lebanese report, to be delivered to the State Department, denied that arbitrary arrests took place in Lebanon and said there were no political prisoners. Police carried out arrests under the authority of the judiciary, it said.

"The information about torture inflicted by the forces of order on certain detainees are exaggerated," the report added. "Pressures are effectively exercised on people

who are arrested and this is a common practice in the most democratic countries.

"In any case, punishments are foreseen under the law for those who use force on detainees during interrogations," it said.

The report also responded to allegations of bad conditions in Lebanese jails by saying the country was emerging from a period of war that had caused widespread destruction and the state was undertaking the rehabilitation of Lebanon's jails and the improvement of conditions for prisoners.

Hizbollah claims attack

Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas said Saturday they had attacked an Israeli patrol in occupied southern Lebanon causing several casualties.

In a statement sent to AFP, the group said it had "repelled a mechanised Israeli military patrol as it tried to advance on the Akmat plain" close to the Iqlim Al Tufah heights.

It said there had been

several Israeli casualties in the clashes, but the radio of Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), only announced a patrol had been attacked in Israel's self-declared "security zone" without mentioning any casualties.

It also did not specify where the attack took place. Earlier the SLA's "Voice of South" radio said a "civilian was seriously injured by an explosive placed in the path of his van on the road to Jezzine," in the north of the zone.

The radio said an unspecified number of passengers in the vehicle with the man were also wounded and hospitalised.

But hospitals contacted along the occupied border zone at Jezzine, Marjayoun and Bint Jbeil, told AFP they had not taken in any casualties.

Meanwhile, Syria accused Israel of deliberately hampering the creation of ceasefire monitoring committee in South Lebanon, after the sus-

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King and Queen return

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor returned home Saturday after a several-day visit to the United Kingdom where King Hussein received the Winston Churchill Award in recognition of his endeavours to achieve peace in the Middle East and enhance regional cooperation and understanding.

The King and Queen were received upon arrival by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, Princess Sarvath and Princess Basma, other royal family members and senior officials.

On Sunday, King Hus-



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, who returned home on Saturday after a visit to the United Kingdom, are received upon arrival by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath (Petra photo)

sein will deliver an address to the nation on the occasion of Jordan's 50th independence anniversary. The address will be delivered at a ceremony marking the occasion to be hosted by Prime

Minister Abdul Karim Kahariti. The ceremony will start at 6.30 p.m.

Peres and Netanyahu meet on TV today

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu are running neck-and-neck ahead of Wednesday's poll and a television debate between them on Sunday is unlikely to spring any surprises.

"I do not think the debate will be a stage for gimmicks or for someone pulling a rabbit out of his hat," Netanyahu adviser Eyal Arad said about Sunday's contest, which will be held three days before the national election.

"There is no need for any rabbits. We have had four years of great achievements... and we have four more years ahead of us. So gimmicks or tricks are unnecessary," said Shimon Sheves, head of the information bureau of Mr. Peres' ruling Labour Party.

The 30-minute debate will be the only chance Mr. Peres and Mr. Netanyahu will have to spar face-to-face in a low-key campaign six months after the killing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-

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Islamists step up pressure on rattled Turkish government

ANKARA (Agencies) — Turkey's powerful Islamist party on Saturday said it was considering a censure motion against secularist Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz as the final nail in the coffin of his tattered coalition government.

"Of course we will wait for it. It's one of the options," Abdullah Gul, a deputy chairman of the Islam-based Welfare Party, told Reuters.

The main opposition Islamists are set to be the biggest beneficiaries from the likely collapse of the conservative government after 11 weeks of bitter fighting.

"Welfare Party is the largest of Turkey. Without us you can't be anything. We have the largest group in parliament," Mr. Gul said in

an interview.

The success of any censure motion, which could not be heard in parliament until after June 2 local elections, would depend on coalition partner Tansu Ciller, who said her True Path Party (DYP) was withdrawing its support from the acrimonious union.

"The DYP will begin to work... urgently for a majority government. Until the new government is formed, our ministers will remain in place," she told reporters after a late-night party strategy session.

She has described the government as "legally and practically finished" after a constitutional challenge to its right to rule.

Welfare came in a narrow

first at inconclusive general elections last December but was denied power by Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz, political soulmates but bitter personal rivals.

The Islamists, whose win was the first victory in Turkey's modern history, have shrewdly played the secularists off against each other.

Much of the government discord is due to Mr. Yilmaz's support for Welfare charges of corruption against former Premier Ciller.

The Islamists, with 158 seats in the 550-seat assembly, were also the instigators of the constitutional court's annulment of the March confidence vote that approved Mr. Yilmaz's administration.

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U.N. experts arrive in Iraq to monitor imports

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A team of U.N. experts has begun to arrive here to set up a long-term system to monitor Iraqi imports and stop Baghdad from rearming, U.N. officials said Saturday.

In particular the experts will control the import of materials and equipment which could be used to produce weapons, Charles Harper, a special assistant to the U.N. committee on Iraqi disarmament (UNSCOM) told AFP.

The first expert arrived on May 18 and "others will follow," he said.

The team's mission was set up under a resolution adopted in March by the U.N. Security Council to create a long-term monitoring system of "dual use" Iraqi imports both now and once the U.N. sanctions on Baghdad are lifted.

"There is a very long list of items in this category. For

instance chemical and industrial equipment and raw materials which use can be perfectly legitimate but which could also be used in the production of mass destruction weapons," Mr. Harper said.

"We have put in place one of the last pieces of the jigsaw in terms of monitoring groups," aimed at ensuring Iraq no longer produces weapons of mass destruction, he added.

The experts will be free to move around the country to set up the monitoring which Mr. Harper said would be "open-ended."

The newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son ridiculed Iraqi ministers on Saturday for praising the oil-for-food deal as a "victory" having previously said it amounted to treason.

In a front page editorial, Babel attacked the minister

for being hypocritical and trying to fool public opinion.

"Each of us remembers the statements from Iraqi officials comparing the oil-for-food deal to a U.N. mandate on Iraq, saying that accepting it would be treason and an attack on the country's dignity and sovereignty," the paper said.

"But once the accord was signed, the marathon began between the beneficial aspects of this accord," said Babel, run by the Iraqi president's eldest son, Uday.

Babel, the only newspaper in Iraq that criticised the government, also called on the television to air the ministers' before and after statements.

Other Iraqi newspapers on Saturday continued to praise the agreement as a great victory for the country.

Iraq has been subjected to a U.N. oil and trade embargo since it invaded Kuwait in

August 1990, but on Monday signed a deal with the United Nations allowing it for the first time in nearly six years to sell limited quantities of crude to buy food and medicines.

The oil-for-food deal is the first easing of the sanctions, but many countries insisted it did not mark an end to the embargo saying Iraq has still to meet U.N. resolutions adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf war to liberate Kuwait.

The deal signed Monday under U.N. Resolution 986, allows Iraq to export \$2 million of oil every six months to buy food and medicine under strict controls.

About one third of proceeds will go to a U.N. fund to compensate victims of the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, and another chunk to finance U.N. activities in Iraq.

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France mourns Trappist monks, but Algeria cannot confirm their deaths

PARIS (Agencies) — As France mourned seven Trappist monks said to have been killed by Algerian guerrillas, the Algerian government said on Saturday it could not confirm or deny their deaths.

An interior Ministry statement carried by Algeria's official news agency APS said: "The Algerian government does not have, to this day, any element that could confirm or deny this information."

It was the first official Algerian reaction to the claim made 48 hours earlier by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) that they had cut the throats of French monks kidnapped two months ago from their Medea monastery, south of Algiers.

French leaders have confirmed that the GIA statement was authentic. Prayers were said for the monks in Paris mosques on Friday and bells will toll in Roman Catholic churches all over the country after the main mass on Sunday.

Political leaders, voicing horror at the news, have agreed to lead a mourning rally in Paris on Tuesday.

"If (the killings) were confirmed, it would cause indignation, repulsion and condemnation in Algeria. It would be in the bloodthirsty and barbarian logic of these criminal groups," the Algerian Interior Ministry said.

"Since the kidnapping of the Trappist monks, the Algerian government has spared no effort to find them

unharmful. Research operations will continue unabated until the criminal kidnappers are punished with all the law's rigour," it said.

The GIA message said the monks, aged 50 to 82, had been slaughtered on Tuesday. They were kidnapped on March 27.

French officials said there was every sign that the message, sent to a Moroccan radio station and saying the priests' throats were slit after France refused to negotiate for their release, was genuine.

They said it used the same quotations from the Koran and the same phrasing as previous communiques by the group and was signed with the stamp of GIA leader Djamel Zitouni.

They said it contained an authenticating reference to a previously undisclosed audio cassette delivered to the French embassy in Algiers on April 30 with a demand for negotiations on the release of Islamic prisoners.

Prime Minister Alain Juppe has confirmed that France had refused to negotiate with the "terrorists" of the GIA, which has killed dozens of foreign residents, including 18 members of the clergy, since ordering all foreigners to leave Algeria in 1993.

Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette hinted Paris would get even with the alleged killers, saying: "Never will these crimes be erased from our memories, and France's memory is long."

The outlawed Algerian fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) condemned the killings in Algeria as running counter to Islam.

The GIA, a radical offshoot of FIS, accuses France of aiding and abetting the military-led government of President Liamine Zeroul.

In a newsletter close to the GIA, parts of which were published by the French daily Liberation on Saturday, the armed fundamentalist group accused France of betraying the organisation and vowed to make its duplicity public.

In its latest edition, numbered 44 — the same number as the announcement of the monk's death — Al Ansar said it would publish documents which "describe events following (the monks') kidnapping and up to (their) death," and "French attempts at betrayal," Liberation reported.

The daily said the newsletter was signed by Abu Abdul Rahman Amin, leader of the Armed Islamic Group, the most radical of the groups fighting Algeria's secular authorities.

The reported killings have provoked widespread condemnation, including from the Islamic World.

Spiritual leader of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah movement in Lebanon, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, on Saturday condemned the murders as a

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Israeli envoy to Turkey tours Syria-claimed area

ISKENDERUN, Turkey (R) — Israel's ambassador to Turkey toured a sensitive border province on Saturday, sending a message to nearby Syria that Turkish-Israeli cooperation is strengthening despite protests from the Arab World.

Ambassador Zvi Elpeleg, accompanied by bodyguards and embassy officials, met local dignitaries in the province of Hatay, claimed from Turkey by Israel's adversary Syria for more than five decades.

"We are here to look at the possibility for further trade between (Turkey and Israel)," Mr. Elpeleg said at his hotel in the Naval port city of Iskenderun, 35 kilometres from the Syrian border.

He denied the weekend visit was related to recent military pact with Turkey which has angered Arabs.

Turkey has ruled Hatay since 1939, when France, then the colonial power in Syria, ceded it to Ankara.

The province, populated mostly by ethnic Arabs, is still shown on Syrian maps as belonging to Damascus.

Turkey and Syria also have

long-running disputes over the sharing of regional water and accusations that Damascus helps Kurdish guerrillas in their 12-year separatist fight in southeast Turkey.

Relations worsened with news that Turkey had signed a secret military pact with Israel in February. Israeli F-16 jets have taken part in training flights over the conservative Muslim heartland of Turkey under the accord.

Turkish Defence Minister Oltan Sungurlu said on Friday the pact would not be debated in parliament despite protests from the country's Islamists and reported doubts by Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz.

"There is legally no question of this agreement being put on the assembly's agenda," Mr. Sungurlu said at a news conference. "If the government doesn't consider the accord appropriate it can solve the problem through other channels," he said.

He said the deal made no provisions for joint naval manoeuvres, as alleged in Turkish press reports. Copies of the accord leaked to a

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ROYAL JORDANIAN

CITY TERMINAL OPENING

Under the patronage of H.M. King Hussein and in celebration of the anniversary of the Independence of Jordan, Royal Jordanian is pleased to announce the opening of the 7th circle City Terminal a new facility to help meet customer needs and ease travel procedures, saving passengers time and effort at Queen Alia International Airport (Q.A.I.A.).

RJ Passengers heading to all RJ destinations are welcomed to conduct all check-in procedures in the City Terminal as of the opening date then proceed to Q.A.I.A. either on RJ buses leaving the City Terminal or by their own means of transportation. Passengers will be welcomed at Q.A.I.A. and lead to a special gate directly to the immigration counter.

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Ahlan Wa Sahlan

PNA sees crucial U.S. role in final status talks

WASHINGTON (USIA) — A senior member of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said here it is crucial that the United States play "an important role" in seeing that the upcoming permanent status negotiations between the PNA and Israel "come to a fruitful end."

In the same breath Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister for planning and international cooperation, complained that the PNA is facing "some serious problems" in getting full U.S. support, primarily from Congress, that is needed to bring about Middle East peace.

Dr. Shaath came to Washington after the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater, awarded him an honorary doctorate in law. He was graduated from the university 31 years ago with a doctorate in business from the university's famed Wharton School, where he also taught for five years before returning to the Middle East.

In his talk at the National Association of Arab Americans Foundation (NAAA) on May 23, Dr. Shaath noted that although the Palestinians have fulfilled all their commitments under the peace process, they are still facing "a total freeze" in Congress on additional aid.

In 1993, at an international donors conference in Washington, the United States had pledged \$500 million to be disbursed over five years. Additional aid has been disbursed or earmarked through other U.S. agencies.

But this is not the case with Israel, Dr. Shaath pointed out. Israel is supported "financially, politically and diplomatically in every way it requires," he stressed.

"It can't continue like this. I think there is something wrong here that needs to be tackled," he argued.

"This peace process needs real support from the United States in continuing these negotiations (and) to make them succeed," he said, adding that the meeting earlier this month between Chairman Yasser Arafat and President Clinton at the White House was "very successful, very warm."

He maintained that the Palestinians have come a

long way in making the peace process a success, "in behaviour" and especially in amending the Palestinian charter, eliminating all the anti-Israel articles. He cited several instances where the peace process has been beneficial to Israel as well.

In reply to a question, he said the new Palestinian charter, which has yet to be drafted, will reflect the peace accords which have been signed and the "mutual recognition" letters exchanged between Mr. Arafat and the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The peace process is at an important juncture, he explained. The United States has "a direct responsibility" to make it work since it is a major sponsor of the process that was launched in Madrid in 1991.

Dr. Shaath said that there are two issues at stake with the process at present: compliance and the permanent status talks.

"No one has talked about Israeli compliance," he declared. "Israel has not fulfilled many of its contractual obligations under the peace accords signed so far." He charged that Israel still occupies Palestinian villages, including Hebron, which it should have left three months ago, and prevents "free passage" movement between Gaza and the West Bank as stipulated in the Oslo accords.

Moreover, he continued, Israel continues to hold several thousand Palestinian political prisoners, including some women prisoners who were supposed to be released under the Tabá agreement, had it not been for the intervention of Israeli President Ezer Weizmann.

He went on to describe the Israeli shutdown of the borders following the recent bombings in Israeli cities as an "absolute, total suffocating siege." This has devastated the Palestinian economy, he charged, and echoed recent observations here that the Palestinian workers may not even find jobs in Israel when and if the borders are opened.

Turning to the issue of the permanent status talks, which were launched "ceremoniously and symbolically" on May 6, as he put it, the minister observed that the peace process began without "the final

outcome (being) clearly defined."

He said there was only one reference to it in the Oslo accords, namely that the final status negotiations are designed to implement U.N. resolutions 242 and 338. The two guidelines of these resolutions, he added, stipulated the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, the evacuation of the territories occupied in 1967 and that a fair solution be found for the Palestinian refugees.

Otherwise, he continued, there should be no problem in settling these final issues if these resolutions were strictly implemented. But the peace accords, he went on, specified that the implementation of the settlement was left to "the parties negotiating the final status issues."

"That is why it is crucial that the United States play an important role in seeing these negotiations come to a fruitful end," he stressed.

At the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where he spoke on May 24, Dr. Shaath was reminded by a questioner that no one in the Labour Party suggested a return to the 1967 borders or a withdrawal from the Israeli settlements in the West Bank "was in the cards."

In reply, Dr. Shaath underlined the "sanctity of resolutions 242 and 338" and reminded his audience that Israel, under the Likud Party of Menachem Begin, withdrew "from every inch of Egyptian territory," referring to the protected negotiations of the Israeli enclave at Tabá, now returned to Egypt.

Similarly, in Jordan the U.N. resolution was observed, he added, and "it will have to be respected in the negotiations with Syria."

He emphasised, "there is absolutely no reason why it should not be respected in the negotiations with the Palestinians."

But Dr. Shaath said the question of territory is not a major issue except over Jerusalem, although he noted that, in accordance with one interpretation, there may be "minor changes in territory on both sides." But in the case of Jerusalem, he added, "it will have to be resolved creatively."

Death sought for Geagea

BEIRUT (AP) — The state prosecutor Friday demanded the death penalty "without mercy" for one-time Christian warrior Samir Geagea, accusing him of masterminding a 1994 church bombing that killed 11 worshippers and wounded 60.

The prosecutor, Adnan Addoum, also demanded death for five of Mr. Geagea's senior security aides in the bombing of the Notre Dame De Deliverance church in the Christian port city of Jounieh north of Beirut.

Mr. Addoum further demanded life imprisonment for Mr. Geagea's chief of staff Fuad Malek and two assistants on charges of complicity in scheming to thwart

Lebanon's recovery from the 1975-1990 civil war.

Mr. Geagea, 45, has already been given two separate death sentences for murdering Christian rivals who challenged his control of Lebanon's Christian heartland after the civil war. But both sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

Mr. Addoum charged that Mr. Geagea, a Maronite Catholic, engineered the Feb. 27, 1994, bombing to create a chaotic climate to help rekindle the civil war and proclaim a breakaway Christian mini-state. Mr. Addoum read out the three-hour indictment in Lebanon's supreme court, sitting in motion Mr. Geagea's third trial since his wartime Lebanese Forces

Christian militia was disbanded and he was arrested in mid-1994.

"This crime is of horrendous inhuman magnitude that deserves the death penalty without mercy or extenuating considerations," Mr. Addoum said.

Mr. Geagea was convicted last summer of engineering the murder of rival Christian politician Danny Chamoun, his half-German wife and two sons at their home in suburban Baabda east of Beirut on Oct. 23, 1991.

In the other trial, Mr. Geagea was found guilty of ordering the Jan. 19, 1990, murder of Elias Zayek, who headed a rival faction of the right-wing Christian Phalange Party.

Ex-Soviet converts to Islam return home

MOSCOW (AFP) — They were barely 20 when they were called up and sent to "liberate" Afghanistan.

On Friday, Nasratula, formerly Nikolai, 33 and Hayadatula, 29 who was called Valentin before he converted to Islam, landed here for their first trip home after living for 14 and nine years respectively with their former captors.

Journalists and cameramen packed into Sheremetyevo airport to catch a glimpse of the returnees whose repatriation was organised through a committee of former Afghan veterans who had been trying to trace them since 1992.

Their return brought to 23 the number of former captives or defectors who have been repatriated since Russian forces left Afghanistan. A total of 287 Soviet soldiers are still listed as missing.

Of these, 25 have been traced but are in no hurry to take advantage of the amnesty proclaimed for those who deserted in a conflict now branded officially as "shameful."

Nasratula and Hayadatula are both Ukrainians. Both went over to the Mujaheddin a few months after beginning their military service, the first in April 1982, the other five years later in northern Afghanistan.

200,000 Iranian troops complete 2-day drills

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Some 200,000 Iranian troops have concluded two days of military exercises, described by officials as a test of Iran's ability to stand up to its enemies — Israel and the United States.

"All the predetermined targets and plans were fully achieved," Brigadier-General Mohammad Mahmoudi, deputy commander of the manoeuvres, said at the end of the live-fire operations.

The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) quoted him as saying the exercise was a "complete success." It claimed the manoeuvres, conducted by one-third of Iran's army, were "unprecedented in Iranian history and the largest of its kind in the world."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader, said the exercise was designed to check Iran's readiness to counter threats by the United States and Israel, which accuse Tehran of sponsoring terrorism and threatening Middle East peace.

"Today, the arrogant American power wants the Islamic Republic of Iran to compromise its independence," Ayatollah Khamenei said Thursday as he kicked off the manoeuvres.

He singled out Israel as the "greatest threat in the region."

"If we want this nation to stand firm and strong against these threats, then the process of construction and development must continue," said Ayatollah

Khamenei as rows of soldiers in khaki uniforms stretched out for six kilometres in the Koushk-e Nosrat desert near the southwestern city of Qom.

Another senior cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Emami-Kashani, said Friday that manoeuvres told "the world that the armed forces of the Islamic republic are alive."

The soldiers, he told a prayer congregation at Tehran University, wanted to "say that they will stand firm and resolute with clenched fists to repel the onslaught of the Zionist enemy."

The United States and Israel have been stepping up their war of words against Iran.

On Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Iran "actively encourages" militant groups to attack targets in Israel.

In a speech in Washington, he said the United States believes Iran will change its alleged support for terrorism only when it is made to pay "a sufficiently high political and economic price." He rebuked America's European allies who have refused to follow his example and impose trade sanctions on Tehran.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres recently accused extremists and Iran in particular of trying to kill the Arab-Israeli peace process and scuttle his hopes of reelection in voting May 29.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudis blame U.S. for collision

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia's biggest shipping company on Saturday blamed a U.S. Navy submarine for a collision that slightly damaged one of its commercial vessels in American waters off the state of Virginia last week. The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA), the second biggest petrochemical transporter in the world, said the incident on May 17 outside the port of Norfolk caused a hole in the hull of its ship, Saudi Mekka. It said the vessel had sailed back to Norfolk for repairs and there were no casualties or damage to the cargo. "According to initial reports and information made available to the company, the captain of Saudi Mekka followed all navigational rules and instructions in such circumstances and that Saudi Mekka is not responsible for the incident," NSCSA said in a statement sent from its Riyadh headquarters. The Pentagon said the U.S. nuclear attack submarine Jacksonville collided with the Saudi vessel about 30 kilometres off Norfolk naval base in the Atlantic. It said the submarine sustained damage to its fair water plane and rudder but there was no damage to the nuclear power plant.

Remains of war dead buried in Tehran

TEHRAN (AP) — The remains of 800 Iranians, recently discovered in the battlefields of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, were buried Friday following a funeral service, Tehran Radio said. It said weeping worshippers poured into the street outside Tehran University and followed army trucks, which carried the remains put in coffins draped with the Iranian flag. Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri and several cabinet ministers attended the funeral procession, the radio said. Officials have said that the remains of more than 25,000 war dead have been discovered in the former battlegrounds since a commission to locate men listed as missing in action was formed in 1991. Some one million people on both sides were killed during the war.

3 Iranians held for murder in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Three Iranians have been arrested after an Indian national was found bludgeoned to death in his jewellery shop with thousands of dollars worth of precious items stolen, Kuwait papers reported on Saturday. Ghangadharan Sasikumar was killed by repeated blows to the back of his head, while more than \$100,000 worth of jewellery was stolen in a daylight raid on Thursday, the reports said. The robbers left untouched a display in the front window of Atlas jewellery shop, situated in the residential area south of Kuwait city called Jleeh Al Shiyokh.

Cyprus hails nomination of mediator

NICOSIA (AFP) — Cyprus on Friday welcomed Britain's appointment of Sir David Hannay as a mediator to try to end the 22-year division of the island. Government spokesman Yiannakis Cassoulides told journalists the appointment was an indication of "the British interest in finding a solution" to the division. Mr. Hannay, who retired as Britain's permanent representative to the United Nations last year, will work closely with the Greek and Turkish communities, British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind announced Thursday. His task will be to find common ground between them and to thrash out a negotiated settlement, he added.

Quake injures 20 people in Iran

NICOSIA (R) — A strong earthquake which hit a town in southern Iran injured 20 people and damaged buildings, the Iranian news agency IRNA said on Saturday. It said three people are in hospital while the rest of the injured left after treatment. IRNA on Friday said the quake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale, powerful enough to cause heavy damage in a populated area, injured nine people in Khonj 380 kilometres south of Tehran. The tremor and three aftershocks hit five residential areas, damaging the town's main mosque, which was several centuries old, and other historical buildings, it said. Quakes plague Iran.

BONN (R) — Germany is

considering limiting an influx of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union because most of them were no longer persecuted and sought to emigrate for economic reasons. Der Spiegel magazine reported.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed in 1990 to accept for humanitarian reasons an unlimited number of Jews from the former Soviet Union, a decision which Germany's Jews hoped would revive a community

Germany may limit Jewish immigration — report

practically wiped out by the Nazi holocaust.

More than 45,000 Jews and relatives have come. But an economic slump and the large number of asylum seekers have made Germans less ready to welcome immigrants and prompted the government to limit asylum applications drastically.

Der Spiegel, in an advance release on Friday from next week's edition,

said Mr. Kohl was considering taking account of this resentment but feared a damaging conflict with Germany's Jews.

It quoted from what it said was a memorandum sent by the foreign ministry to German embassies in the former Soviet Union, which process the Jews' immigration applications.

"In the light of the fact that the original purpose of the intake has largely gone,

the basic political question remains open whether we wish to continue the entry procedure at all," it quoted the memo as saying.

The foreign ministry could not immediately be reached for comment and a government spokesman said he was unaware of any plans by the chancellor to try to limit Jewish immigration.

The memo, dated Dec. 19, 1995, said a further

110,000 Jews and relatives had applied to come to Germany and 40,000 requests had already been approved. "Several hundred thousand more are in the queue and want to submit applications," it said.

It said Jews were now only rarely discriminated against in the former Soviet Union and most wanted to leave on economic grounds.

It also said many non-

Jews took advantage of a relatively lax procedure to emigrate to Germany with false documents. Only 20 percent of the immigrants were interested in long-term membership of a Jewish community, it said.

Germany's policy is controversial in Israel, whose President Ezer Weizman said during a visit in January that he could not understand how Jews could still live in Germany. Taking the

they were Jews. But he said there had been no mention by either ministry of plans to limit the influx. "And from our point of view there is no need for any action," he said.

Mr. Bubis conceded that there was practically no more state discrimination against Jews since the collapse of the Soviet Union. "But there was and is horrible anti-Semitic incitement from radical right-wing groups such as Pamyar," he said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 723111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:00 The Flintstones
15:30 Mac and Matley
16:00 Italian Soccer
17:00 Ordy
17:15 La Vie Bohème
17:30 Jett
18:00 Sports Et Musique
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Cinema: Cinema
20:00 On The Banks of Jordan Pt. I
20:30 Jordanian Armed Forces Band
20:45 Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
21:10 Annie Lennox - in Concert
22:00 News in English
22:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
23:10 Feature Film: "Starting Again"

PRAYER TIMES

03:56 (Sunrise) Fajr
05:25 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
12:32 Dhuhr
16:13 Maghreb
19:37 Maghreb
21:08 Isha

CHURCHES

S. Mary of Nazareth Church
St. George's Church, Tel. 810740
St. Peter's of God Church, Tel. 624590
St. Paul's of the Annunciation Church, Tel. 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 622541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 713131

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 713261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 717751

Armenian International Church Tel. 652536

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Lutheran Day School Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholic Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Relative warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures higher than average and winds northwesterly moderate. On Monday, temperatures are expected to drop becoming around average. In Amman, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

min./Max. temp.

Amman 18 / 32

Aqaba 24 / 38

Deserts 19 / 35

Jordan Valley 27 / 34

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 31, Aqaba 37, Humidity

readings: Amman 44 per cent.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Aqaba 31 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMBULANCE: 646070

Dr. Bassam Karadshich 759200

Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 894788

Dr. Salwan Daboubi 776751

First pharmacy 661912

Fordons pharmacy 778336

Al Asana pharmacy 637055

Nairookh pharmacy 626732

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yaacoub pharmacy 644945

Shuciani pharmacy 637660

Nairookh pharmacy 626762

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakr 276852

Aqaba pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Rashid Attallah 994424

Khalil pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 647101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 663800

Prior Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage 897467

Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone 623101

Repairs 661101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636361

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMBMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 81381332

Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 6442816

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 644412

Jabal Amman Maternity 642662

Melias, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279

The Islamic, Abdali 66612737

Al-Anli, Abdali 6641646

Italia, Al-Makajir 7771013

Al-Badri, J. Amman 7731126

Army, Marka 891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Queen attends EC concert Purcell Fund graduate Rula Nabeel accompanies on piano

AMMAN (J.T.) The European Community Chamber Orchestra, accompanied by Jordanian pianist Rula Nabeel, Friday held a fund-raising concert, organised by the Jordan Purcell Anniversary Fund, at Windsor Castle in England.

Queen Noor, the patron of the Purcell Fund, attended the concert, which was followed by a reception in her honour to "introduce the fund to potential sponsors and other friends of Jordan in Britain," a Royal Court statement said.

The Purcell Anniversary Fund, which was established in March 1995 with the encouragement and patronage of Queen Noor, was created on the 30th anniversary of the death of the renowned English composer Henry Purcell.

It is a non-profit charitable organisation, administered by the British embassy in Amman, and awards music scholarships to Jordanians and permanent residents of Jordan studying at the secondary and university levels.

The fund, which has sent three Jordanian music students to the U.K. this year, seeks to improve the standards of musical education in Jordan and to meet the needs of talented young musicians who would benefit from continuing their musical education in Britain, the statement said.

Ms. Rula Nabeel, a member of the Purcell Fund Board, received a scholarship in 1983 from the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's Royal Endowment for Culture and Education (RECE) to pursue advanced music studies in Germany, according to the statement.

She joined the State Music Academy of Heidelberg and Mannheim where she was awarded the Musiklehrer Academic Diploma under the guidance of the renowned pianist Professor Helmut Schwarz.

In addition to performing in Europe, most notably at the Seville Expo in 1992 in Spain, Ms. Nabeel gave the Jerash South Theatre its first piano concert in June 1990.

Ministry makes gift of 7 tonnes of medical supplies to PNA

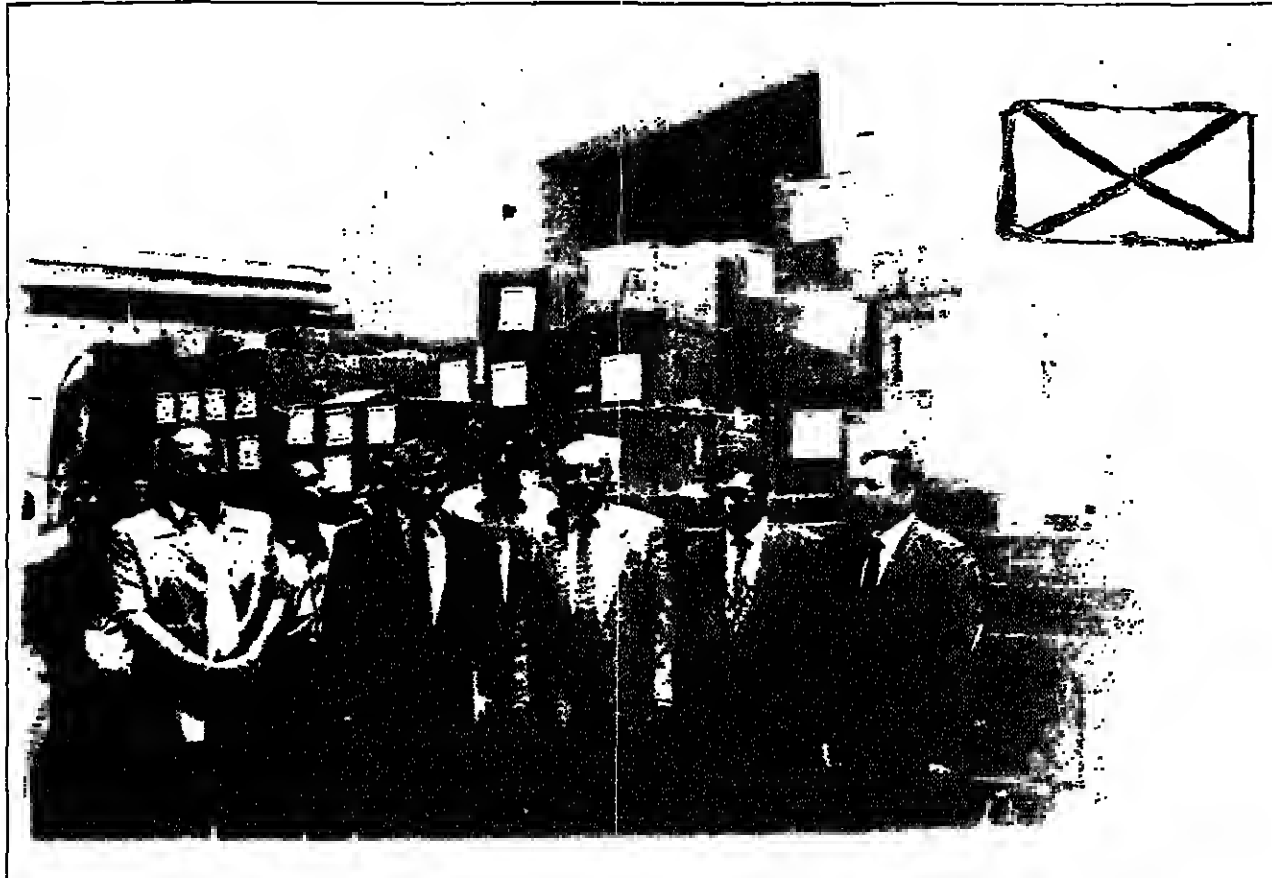
AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Saturday presented the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with a gift of seven tonnes of medicines and drugs to help meet shortages in medical supplies in the Palestine self-rule areas resulting from the continued closure of the Palestinian territories.

Acting Minister of Health Mustafa Shneikat, who handed the shipment to a PNA representative at Al Bashir Hospital in Amman, said the gift represents Jordan's standing policy of providing assistance to the PNA and the Palestinian people.

The medicines, which include children's medications and antibiotics are urgently needed, said the minister who noted that the shipment was sent by the Ministry of Health upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein.

Palestine Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khatib voiced his appreciation to Jordan for its continued assistance and support for the Palestinian people.

He said the shipment was evidence of Jordan's continued care for the Palestinians in their on-going efforts to achieve freedom. Last month the Ministry



Ministry of Health and Palestinian National Authority (PNA) officials attend a gift presentation ceremony at which Jordan presented the PNA with seven tonnes of medical supplies (Petra photo)

of Supply signed a deal under which Jordan will sell the PNA 5,000 tonnes of flour which is now being

shipped to Palestinian territories at the rate of 250 tonnes per day. In March Jordan

announced a donation of several tonnes of wheat flour to the PNA as a gift to the Palestinians at a time

when international flour prices rose sharply and there was an acute shortage of the staple in Palestinian



Deputising for Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh, Ministry of Youth Secretary General Majed Quteishat Saturday takes part in the Independence Day March, organised by Al Mustakbal Club for the Physically Handicapped. About 500 people turned out for the march, meant to celebrate Al Faisali's win of the second place in the Arab Cup Winners' Cup Soccer Championship which concluded in Amman Wednesday (Petra photo)

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- Exhibition of photos of French artists and books by Yvan Pommaux and Christophe Besse at the French Cultural Centre, until May 31.
- Bani Hamida annual spring exhibition "Visions," until May 26.
- Works from the collection of Musa del Gradaba Espanol contemporaneo Marbella "From Picasso to Our Present Days," at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 6.
- Exhibition of metal-made furniture by Salim Bandak of the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, until May 31.
- Recent works by Ayyad Al Nimer at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until June 12.
- Exhibition of Turkish products at Philadelphia Hotel, until May 30.
- Exhibition of Jordanian industrial products entitled "Made in Jordan," at the Amman International Exhibit, Murj Al Hamam, until June 2.

EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL

- Swedish film "Nionde Kompaniet," and Belgian film "Anchoress," at 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. respectively at Prince Hassan Auditorium, University of Jordan.

PLAY

- "The Burial Night of Actress 'C'" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 p.m. (in Arabic).

Italian diva to perform in benefit recital for Al Hussein Society

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Al Hussein Society for the Rehabilitation of the Physically Handicapped has invited the celebrated Italian soprano Cecilia Gasdia to perform in Amman in a benefit recital on June 1.

The diva will be accompanied by maestro Paolo Ballarín on piano and by soprano Lidia Tamburino.

The programme will include famous arias and tunes from the operas of Rossini, Puccini and Mozart.

Music lovers and connoisseurs will be treated to some of the finest interpretations of pieces taken from Il Barbiere di Siviglia, La Bohème, Tosca, Le Nozze di Figaro and Madame Butterfly.

Riding high the wave of fame, Ms. Gasdia is now one of Italy's and the world's most popular singers.

Having played almost all of the great opera roles — from Violetta in La Traviata to Donna Anna in Don Giovanni — and having performed under the direction of stars like Franco Zeffirelli, Claudio Abbado and Ken Russell, Cecilia Gasdia is the incarnation of the art of song.

In addition to the performers' talent, the very choice of beautiful and well-known pieces for the programme constitutes in itself a temptation difficult to resist.

The special concert comes in the framework of the Al Hussein Society's fund-raising activities, to sustain its continued efforts that aim to extend educational, rehabilitative and vocational services.

Talking to the Jordan Times, HRH Princess Majda Raad, president of the society, stressed that services are not limited to its centre in Amman, but also reach needy communities in the rural areas of the country.

Maintaining the effort is a necessity in order "to put a smile on the faces of our disadvantaged sons and daughters throughout the Kingdom," Princess Majda said.

Cecilia Gasdia's concert is a rare occasion to enjoy fine opera songs and support Al Hussein Society at the same time.

Jordan looks at prospects of cooperation with Swiss hotel management school

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan took part in a three-day European Incentive and Business Travel and Meetings exhibition (EIBTM) held in Geneva, Switzerland where more than 2,000 institutions from 100 nations were also attending.

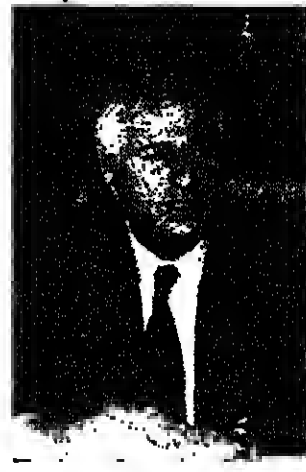
Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Saleh Irsheidat led the delegation to the exhibition. Also on the team were 11 tour operators and three hotel representatives from Jordan. The delegation returned to Amman Saturday evening.

Dr. Irsheidat and Jordan's ambassador to the United Nations headquarters in Geneva Abdullah Madad-hah attended the opening of the exhibition during which representatives of the European Union (EU) delivered speeches underlining the importance of the event for tourism.

Delegations at the exhibition represented corporate companies, incentive houses and other businesses that are interested in Jordan as a destination for their incentive trips.

Also delegates from Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Brazil met the Jordanian participants and discussed cooperation in tourism.

Dr. Irsheidat visited the Singapore wing at the exhibition and discussed prospects of benefiting from Singapore's experience for the purpose of creating international conferences centres in Jordan.



Saleh Irsheidat

Dr. Irsheidat also visited the Lausanne Hotel Training College, one of the leading institutions of its kind in the world, and discussed with the management ways to launch cooperation between the college and the Amman Training Hotel (ATH) in Jordan.

A Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities statement said the ATH management which is owned and has been managed by the Ministry of Education since its establishment in 1981, will soon be handed over to a private company to help boost its training programmes.

An Amman Training Hotel official said that the facility, which currently offers 150 students a two-year course, was expected to be turned over to the private company by June 10.

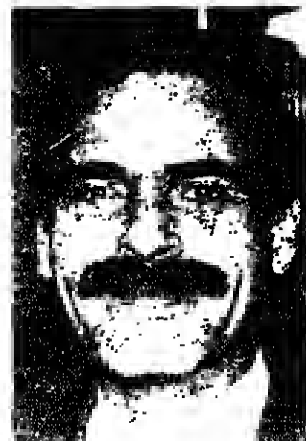
The Ministry of Tourism said Jordan's private and public sectors will be involved in the private company.

Minister urges EU nations to write-off third world debts

CATANIA, Italy (Petra) — Jordan has urged the European Union (EU) member nations to write-off the Kingdom's debts to them and those of other third world countries or at least cancel the servicing charges on these debts in order to help boost development of these nations.

Minister of Labour Abdul Hafez Shakhanbeh told a conference attended by European and Mediterranean countries to discuss the social dimension of the future European-Mediterranean partnership that the heavy debts on the countries south of the Mediterranean are weighing heavily on them and continue to create threatening social problems which aggravate poverty and unemployment problems and can often result in disturbances and violence.

"Writing off some or all of these debts would serve as a very positive sign that would contribute to a successful partnership and integration in the future," said Dr. Shakhanbeh.



Abdul Hafez Shakhanbeh

He said there was need for the two sides to pursue a dialogue over this issue with a view to reducing the volume of debts on the poorer nations to make them eligible for partnership with Europe.

Referring to Jordan's stand with regard to peace, Dr. Shakhanbeh said the Kingdom's call for keeping the Mediterranean region a zone of peace marked by stability and development rather than wars and conflict that have caused so much destruction to the region for so long.

"We hope to see this sea serving as a symbol of just peace that brings with it stability and tranquility and assures the nations of the region about their future," said the minister.

"We in Jordan would like to emphasise to you that we renounce and fight off all forms of terrorism and we seek to cooperate with you to curtail terrorism because we believe that sustainable development and partnership requires such cooperation," added Dr. Shakhanbeh.

Referring to trade, services and technology exchanges, Dr. Shakhanbeh said under the present situation the balance is heavily in favour of the northern countries of the Mediterranean and therefore there is a need for bridging this large gap so that the countries of the south could gradually become eligible for partnership with those of the north.

NATO soldiers get reminder

(Continued from page 12)

ments appeared to be letting pressure off Gen. Mladic and his fellow indicted Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

IFOR has been in Bosnia since December and has yet to detain a single war crimes suspect.

Mr. Karadzic is admitted, off the record, to have been allowed to travel unhindered on one occasion at the start of the year from his house in the Serb "capital" of Pale to Banja Luka, passing through several IFOR checkpoints on the way.

According to an "understanding" reached earlier this week between Serb leaders on one side and top international civilian official Carl Bildt and a senior U.S. representative on the other, the indicted Serb leaders have been required to lie low, and be "neither seen nor heard" in Bosnia in the future.

France meanwhile hacked efforts by Mr. Bildt to remove Mr. Karadzic from office to clear the way for

post-war elections.

Mr. Bildt reiterated after meeting President Jacques Chirac in Paris that Mr. Karadzic, twice indicted for war crimes, must leave public life and face a United Nations tribunal in the Hague.

"Mr. Karadzic knows his future, and his future is before the tribunal," Mr. Bildt told reporters.

A presidential aide said Mr. Chirac hailed Mr. Bildt's action as courageous and said the Dayton accord on Bosnia peace must be fully implemented.

As the international community's high representative in Bosnia, the former Swedish premier is coordinating civilian peace efforts and leading efforts to have Mr. Karadzic removed.

He declined to comment on what further steps could be taken to remove the hardline who has resisted intense pressure to leave under the Dayton agreement, which ended Bosnia's 43-month war.

The Paris declaration followed United States insist-

ence on Friday that it would make no deal to allow Mr. Karadzic and Gen. Mladic to escape prosecution for war crimes.

The fate of the two is expected to be a major issue when U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher meets the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia in Geneva on June 2.

Mubarak

(Continued from page 12)

Col. Qadhafi sent home the Palestinians last year to protest at what he called a sham peace between the Palestinians and Israel but then changed his mind in October and gave them six months to leave. The six months ended in April.

Mr. Mubarak and Col. Qadhafi last met in January at the Egyptian border military base of Sidi Barrani.

Col. Qadhafi arrived in a white Cadillac Friday in Mar-sa Matruh, 200 kilometres from the border, where he met with leaders of bedouin tribes in the region.

'New government soon in Kabul'

(Continued from page 12)

wounded in the ongoing battle. Independent confirmation of the casualty figure was not immediately available.

Although a number of warring factions have expressed interest in forging a peaceful settlement to Afghanistan's four years of civil war, the Taliban have refused to attend negotiations with Mr. Rahhani.

Taliban rebels, in control of more than half of Afghanistan, have vowed to drive Mr. Rabbani from the capital and install strict Islamic rule throughout the country.

The Taliban in September marched to the capital's southern outskirts, but were halted by the city defences. Since then, the rebels have been launching rockets and mortar rounds into the city on an almost daily basis.

Bolstered by his new alliance, Mr. Rahhani has demanded the Taliban rebels to lay down their arms.

"We want the Taliban to give up the thinking and notion of war," Mr. Murad said. "We want them to know there is no reason for their fighting."

The government will also try to persuade northern Afghanistan's Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum to join the interim government.

"The formation of the interim government will happen on the basis of an agreement between all parties and their inclusion in the peace process," Mr. Murad said.

Television officials said they had decided to resume showing Egyptian programming "in response to viewers' demands," adding that they would show new ones as soon as they could get them.

Khartoum

(Continued from page 12)

years due to political tensions between the two countries.

Sudanese were able to enjoy Friday night the first episode of "Al Gisir," an Egyptian soap opera from the 1980.

Television officials said they had decided to resume showing Egyptian programming "in response to viewers' demands," adding that they would show new ones as soon as they could get them.

Burmese media blasts Suu Kyi ahead of Congress

RANGOON (R) — Burma's official media Saturday branded opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi a sorceress bent on destabilising the nation on the eve of a controversial meeting of her pro-democracy party.

A source from Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party told Reuters the 1991 Nobel Peace laureate was finalising plans for the congress and preparing for her regular Saturday speech — made each weekend to supporters from her front gates.

The military authorities have detained nearly 220 pro-democracy activists, according to NLD sources, in what the party says is an attempt to prevent Sunday's party congress from going ahead at Ms. Suu Kyi's Rangoon home.

A commentary in state-controlled newspapers said the planned NLD meeting was meant to be a "coercive show of strength."

"If the democracy sorceress and her gangsters succeed in their bid, urban and rural tranquillity, peaceful pursuit of education, commercial dealings,

etc., all peaceful social life of the people would be spoilt," the commentary said.

"If the government watched the situation with folded arms, it would not be the government desiring national well being," it added.

Since Monday, the government has been plucking NLD members off the streets, taking them from their homes or arresting them off buses as they attempted in travel to Rangoon, opposition sources said.

Most of those arrested are elected representatives of the NLD who were heading for Rangoon to attend the party congress.

It is to be the first meeting of the elected representatives as a group since they scored a landslide election victory in 1990, winning more than 80 per cent of the seats.

They were never allowed to serve as members of parliament because the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) — which called the election — never recognised the results.

Although SLORC spokesmen said

earlier this week they had no plans to stop the Saturday speech from taking place, Ms. Suu Kyi and diplomats said they would not be surprised if the government made it impossible for people to attend by blocking off the road in front of Ms. Suu Kyi's home, as they had done in the past.

"We are still hearing rumours that they won't let it happen," said one diplomat. "It will be interesting to see, because it may be a sign of what's to come on Sunday."

Ms. Suu Kyi told reporters Friday she had heard the government might try and stop the Saturday speech and the Sunday meeting, but they would both go on as planned.

"We are still going to go ahead with our plans unless they make it physically impossible for us to do so," she said.

By Saturday morning, there was no sign of a police presence outside her house, and the roads were still open.

Ms. Suu Kyi's house has been a buzz with activity as workers constructed a thatched meeting hall and party members readied posters and pictures of Ms. Suu Kyi to give to rep-

Mongolia's fires rage out of control

YOEROO, Mongolia (R) — Huge fires that have raged across the forests of northern Mongolia for five weeks, killing 18 people, injuring 62 and leaving thousands homeless, show no signs of abating, officials said.

Thousands of firefighters, many equipped with just felt blankets, branches or shovels, have struggled to hold back hundreds of blazes that have destroyed more than 80,000 square kilometres of forest and pastureland.

Residents of Selenge province's Yoeroo County, 200 kilometres north of the capital Ulan Bator, said an army officer and five soldiers had been missing for five days after heading into a smoke-shrouded forest to try to put out one blaze.

"My son left on horseback to fight the fire on Monday," the mother of one of the missing soldiers told Reuters from her tent. "He never came back and people have been looking for them for days."

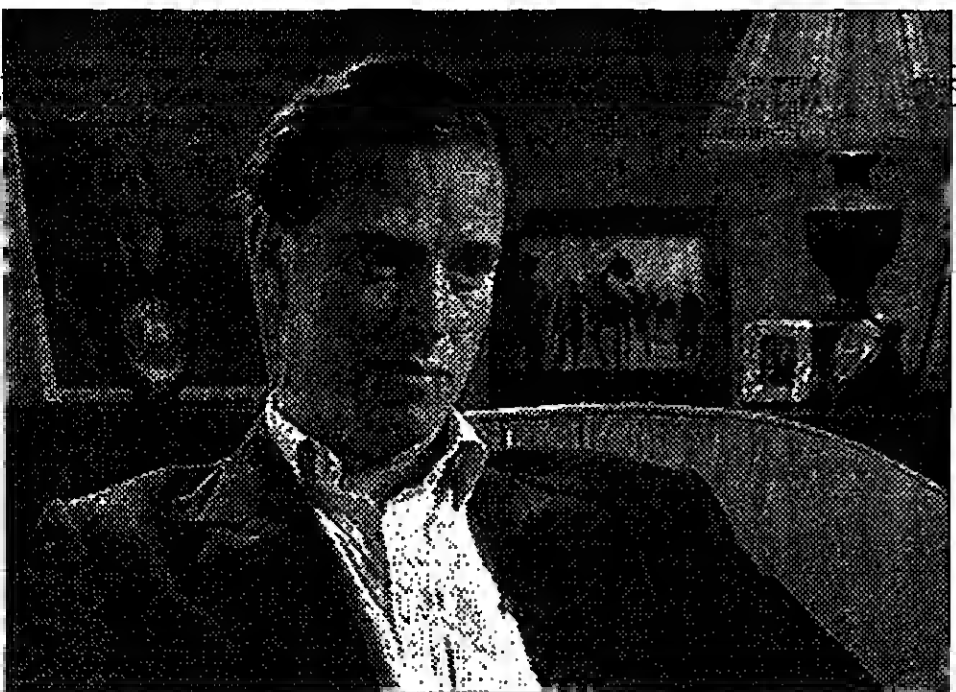
The five 18-year-old soldiers and their officer went missing after joining teams of servicemen fighting a huge fire raging through Yoeroo's forests, local officials said. The soldiers had taken no food with them.

The fire had been burning on a 30-kilometre front and had destroyed a bridge on the Yoeroo River, making passage difficult for firefighters, the officials said.

The fires as a whole have caused an estimated \$1.8 billion in damage to Mongolia's frail economy, already badly hit by the collapse of the Soviet Union, its former sponsor.

"The situation is getting far more worse than it has been," said head of the Civil Defence in Ulan Bator. "There is little hope of the fires calming down."

He added: "About 1,000 active professionals such as firefighting parachutists, army officials and police are working on 38 fires that are out of control."



Former Army officer James Hewitt talks in a pre-recorded TV interview about his relationship with the Princess of Wales (Reuters photo)

Hewitt describes Diana's love 'all-encompassing, fulfilling'

LONDON (R) — A dashing cavalry officer who had an adulterous affair with Britain's Princess Diana described her love as "all-encompassing and fulfilling" in a television interview widely attacked as a money-grabbing betrayal.

A frank kiss-and-tell interview with ex-life guards officer James Hewitt about the passionate five-year affair was being shown for the first time on British TV over the weekend.

"It is very difficult to say how physical she wanted the relationship to become and I'm not going to suggest one way or another whose fault it was, but it developed and it was mutual," he said.

"Diana's love is all-encompassing and fulfilling and I was greatly privileged to have been on the receiving end of that," he added.

Princess Diana, estranged wife of royal heir Prince Charles, now negotiating a divorce, confessed on television last year that she had a sexual relationship with Mr. Hewitt, saying: "Yes, I adored him. Yes, I was in love with him. But I was very let down."

Prince Charles himself admitted adultery earlier in a similar television interview. Princess Diana said she had known about her husband's relationship with old flame Camilla Parker Bowles.

Mr. Hewitt was nicknamed "Cad" and "Major Rat" by British newspapers after a 1994 book disclosed details of the affair.

A small British cable television station, Live TV, which reaches an audience of only 1.45 million, said it would screen the 45-minute interview over 20 times Saturday and Sunday.

Mr. Hewitt, relaxed and smiling in a casual open-necked shirt, said he was instantly attracted to Princess Diana when they first

met in the late 1980s when her marriage was already in trouble.

Ostracised by his old royal regiment and members of Princess Diana's social set, Mr. Hewitt now lives in southwest England where he runs a riding stables. Shunned as a "love-rat" for selling his side of the story, he found it hard to secure buyers for the interview conducted by an independent producer.

Live TV, owned by Britain's tabloid Mirror Newspaper Group, is the only British television outlet to have bought the programme. It is reported to have paid about £100,000 (\$152,000).

Britain's best-known royal reporter James Whitaker said the interview revealed little new about the relationship, which started when Mr. Hewitt taught Princess Diana and her sons how to ride horses.

But Mr. Whitaker added "I found it riveting. It is quite revealing what he is doing. It is a money-making exercise... But it is fascinating."

Mr. Whitaker described Mr. Hewitt, who served in the Gulf War, as a charming, good-looking man. "He says he is only good at two things — riding horses and making love to women."

"He has tried other ways of making money but he is incapable of that, so what does he do?"

"He turns and trashes a woman who he repeatedly says how much he loved and adored. It really is betrayal at the worst level," Mr. Whitaker said.

Judy Wade, royal reporter with the Hello magazine, said the interview was "laughable."

"This guy is just trying to justify himself... We all know he is just after the money," she said.

Foreign arms sales to Taiwan hurt ties — China

BEIJING (R) — China slammed arms sales to Taiwan, saying they were an obstacle to better ties between Beijing and Taipei, Hong Kong's Wen Wei Po daily reported Saturday.

Taiwan Friday commissioned the first of six missile frigates it ordered from France in 1991.

"The main obstacles to improved ties between China and Taiwan are foreign arms sales to Taipei and the government's insincerity," the Beijing-backed newspaper quoted China Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang as saying.

Relations between China and Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province, have worsened in recent months.

In the run-up to Taiwan's March 23 presidential election, China carried out war games and unarmed missile tests in the Taiwan Strait in what Beijing acknowledged was a bid to intimidate voters against the island pursuing independence.

The missile tests highlighted Taiwan's vulnerability to Chinese attack and intensified calls for Washington to furnish Taipei with Patriot missiles. Taiwanese media have said the anti-missile system could be deployed as early as August.

China also hit out at Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's May 20 inaugural presidential address, in which he offered to travel to China on a "journey of peace" to mend frayed ties, the Chinese-language Wen Wei Po said.

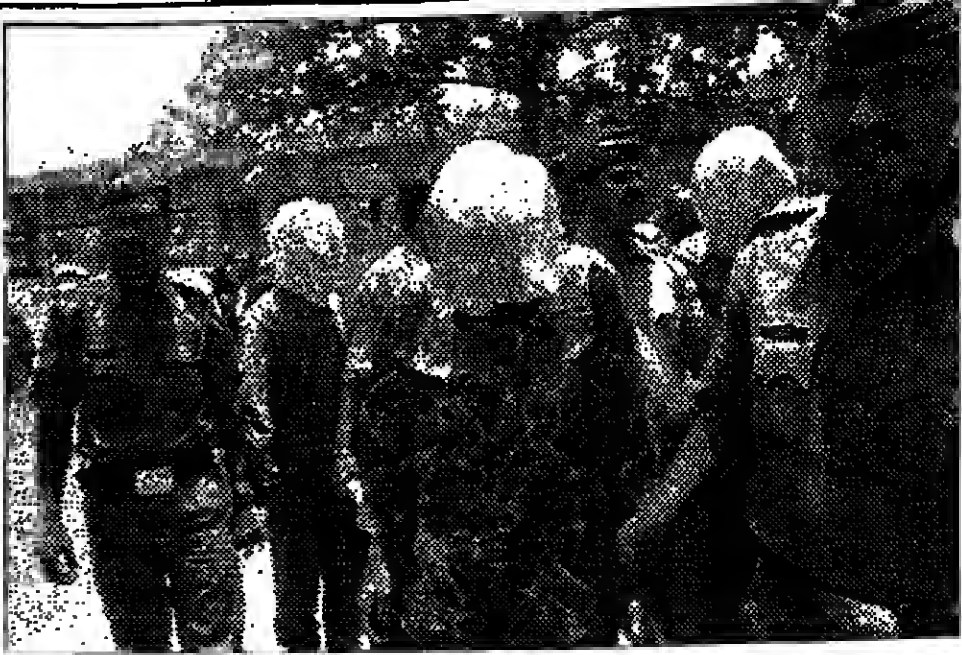
"What the Taiwan leader said recently was designed solely to cheat people," the newspaper quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen as saying.

"Taiwan always creates conditions unacceptable to us in their practical actions... Therefore, cross-strait relations cannot be really relieved," Mr. Shen said.

It was up to Taiwan to remove obstacles to improved ties by taking concrete steps that showed sincerity, the newspaper quoted Mr. Shen as saying.

"The ball... is in Taiwan's court," Mr. Shen said, but stressed that foreign arms sales and Mr. Lee's insincerity remained crucial obstacles to better ties between the two rivals.

Commenting on Mr. Lee's offer to visit China, Chinese Vice-Premier Qian Qichen told reporters Wednesday that China had in January 1995 invited the Taiwan leadership to the mainland, the official Xinbua Daily Telegraph newspaper said.



Three men arrested on suspicion of having links with terrorist organisations in Kashmir are led Saturday by policemen into a Bombay court with their faces covered. Security in the city has been tightened following two bomb blasts in Delhi and Rajasthan last week that killed more than 27 people (Reuters photo)

Indian authorities arrest 2 blast suspects in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Indian authorities have arrested two suspects allegedly involved in two deadly bomb blasts in New Delhi and the desert state of Rajasthan which killed at least 35 people, an official said Saturday.

Farooq Ahmad Khan, head of the Special Task Force set up about two years ago to combat Muslim insurgency in Kashmir, told reporters in this state winter capital that the two suspects were arrested Thursday.

"We have arrested two persons. We are handing them over to the New Delhi police," he said.

Police sources said one of the suspects was Begam Farida, sister of Bilal Beg who heads the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front which claimed responsibility for the New Delhi blast Tuesday.

The other person was a man about whom no details were given.

Ms. Farida's arrest sparked a demonstration by women in the Srinagar quarter of Soluna Saturday, witnesses said. They shouted anti-Indian slogans outside a police station and were beaten by baton-wielding policemen.

Sources said the two were being flown to New Delhi later Saturday for interrogation. Indian detectives Friday detained some

500 people for questioning in connection with a deadly car-bomb blast at a crowded New Delhi market Tuesday in which 13 people died by official count.

Other reports put the toll at 28. The Front claimed responsibility for the attack saying it was to avenge the killing of Muslim separatists by Indian troops in troubled Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

On Wednesday, a bomb exploded in a packed bus travelling to Rajasthan from the Taj Mahal town of Agra. No one claimed responsibility for it.

Home Minister Murli Manohar Joshi has accused Pakistan of masterminding the New Delhi blast, saying there was "concrete proof" of its involvement. Islamabad has denied the charge.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over the disputed state of Kashmir, where a bloody Muslim separatist drive has claimed more than 12,000 lives since 1989.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting insurgency in the state — a charge Islamabad denies saying it extends moral and diplomatic support to a legitimate campaign for self-rule.

India ruling party predicts a likely split in opposition ranks

NEW DELHI (R) — India's minority government, facing a vote of confidence next week, believes a probe ordered into allegations of bribery in the previous parliament could split opposition ranks, politicians said Saturday.

Sources in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said the Congress Party of previous Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao may splinter over the case.

A Delhi High Court judge ordered a fresh probe Friday into accusations by a citizens group that the Congress bribed deputies from a small party in the previous parliament to support Mr. Rao in a confidence vote in 1993.

A BJP source said the party was not discounting the possibility that the issue could split the Congress before the BJP faces parliament in a test of strength next week. A vote of no-confidence in the right-wing Hindu nationalist government is likely Tuesday.

The Congress and the United Front, a loose grouping of leftists, centrists and regional parties, has vowed to vote against the BJP. The two groups together hold a majority in the Lok Sabha, the House of the People, and the BJP's tenure at the moment appears unlikely to last beyond next week.

"There's one noose and too many keen executioners," a BJP deputy told Reuters. "There is a good chance they will be jostling with each other, when the time comes, and forget to hang the BJP."

BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as prime minister on May 16 after his grouping won the highest number of seats in elections in April and May.

On Saturday, the BJP appeared to have made little headway from its tally of 194 deputies, including allies, in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, party sources said.

If the government does lose the vote, the United Front plans to stake a claim for power, with the chief minister of the south-

ern state of Karnataka, H.D. Deve Gowda, as its choice for prime minister.

The front has been promised support by Mr. Rao's vanquished Congress Party.

BJP sources said the party was talking to as yet unidentified leaders from both the main opposition groups to persuade them to abstain from the confidence vote.

The vote is decided by deputies present and voting, and the party is seeking the abstentions in an attempt to squeak through, BJP sources said.

They said growing reservations expressed by a powerful group of regional leaders within the Congress on Mr. Rao's offer to help the United Front gain power could also help their bid.

The Statesman newspaper said Mr. Rao was due to begin a series of meetings with regional deputies from Saturday to assess their reactions to Congress support to the front.

The Financial Express quoted former Congress Minister Ajit Singh as warning of a simmering rebellion against Mr. Rao over his promised support to Deve Gowda.

But the BJP's biggest hope hinged on the wider acceptability of Mr. Vajpayee among opposition groups as a moderate leader who has kept a discreet distance from his party's hardline pro-Hindu policies.

Mr. Vajpayee underscored his acceptability with a moderate BJP agenda Friday when President Shankar Dayal Sharma formally opened the new parliament and spelled out key programmes the BJP proposes to pursue.

These were free of controversy and excluded the right-wing pro-Hindu rhetoric that the BJP has used in its campaign.

"The opposition will find it very difficult to disagree with any of the well-intentioned plans, programmes and projects of the new government," the Times of India newspaper commented.

No Indonesian crown prince — Suharto's son

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's President Suharto has not groomed any member of his family to run the country, his second son Bambang Trihatmodjo was quoted Saturday as saying. "Father has never prepared a crown prince (from his family)," he was quoted by the Media Indonesia and Kompas daily newspapers as saying during a working session of the ruling Golkar Party. Mr. Suharto, 74, is widely expected to seek reelection for a seventh presidential term in March 1998. But the death last month of his wife of 48 years and closest confidant, Ibu Tien, raised questions over Mr. Suharto's political plans and an eventual successor. Mr. Trihatmodjo said his father had always put the reelection issue in the hands of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). The assembly, made up of 500 members from the mainly elected House of Representatives and 500 government appointees, elects the president and vice-president for five-year terms. Mr. Trihatmodjo, who like other members of Suharto's family is prominent in the business community, shrugged off suggestions he was being groomed to succeed the president. "I don't want it. I feel comfortable staying on the business side. The reelection issue is in the hands of the MPR," he was quoted as saying.

Shanghai officials entertain at bowling alleys

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Chinese officials in Shanghai have taken to entertaining at 10-pin bowling alleys after the city government slapped a ban on meals and karaoke sessions paid with public funds, a report said Saturday. The Liberation Daily reported an investigation of 31 hotels, entertainment outlets, restaurants and bowling centres in March found that 1,341 of 1,891 games bowled were paid by official cheques. "Nobody knows whether the other 550 bills paid by cash would be reimbursed by the enterprises or not," the newspaper said. Among the 61 company managers and head of enterprises who were questioned by investigators, 48 said they went bowling for business, not out of personal interest. The report quoted the managers as saying that big meals and karaoke lounges were no longer attractive because they were "too eye-catching and vulgar." The Shanghai government clamped down on the use of public funds to entertain at restaurants, karaoke lounges and nightclubs last month in a bid to stamp out corruption. The fad of bowling attracted managers and department heads who needed to entertain business associates or top leaders to "smooth and develop relations," the report said.

Shanghai daily raps superstitious performances

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A Shanghai daily Saturday rapped popular opera performances in the countryside in southern Guangdong province for encouraging superstitious beliefs and wasting money. The Wen Hui Bao Daily said in an editorial that the performances had become a problem with some counties and towns staging more than 3,000 performances a year or as many as 10 performances daily. About 90 per cent of the operas, which were coloured by feudalism, superstition and Buddha worship, were sung by amateur travelling groups not approved by authorities, the editorial said. Before the performances, villagers worshipped on bended knees and made offerings before the wooden stage, the editorial said.

80 killed in 2 Chinese mine disasters

BEIJING (R) — Nearly 80 people have been killed in two separate mining disasters in China, delayed news reports said Saturday.

A gas explosion rocked a coal mine in central Hunan province killing 46 miners and leaving 38 missing, while flooding in a lead and zinc mine in northern Gansu province killed 33.

Authorities rescued 97 people at the Pingdingshan Mine after the May 21 blast, said the May 23 edition of the Hunan Daily, just seen in Beijing.

Authorities were still investigating the cause of the explosion. The report gave no more details.

The China Youth Daily said Saturday the bodies of 33 mine-workers were recovered on May 21 nearly three weeks after floods trapped them in three underground caves in Gansu.

After the accident, the Cheng Xian Geographic Mining Bureau ordered the clo-

sure of the mines, part of China's second-highest lead and zinc mine complex in Lijiang, it said.

Reports of both disasters reached Beijing just a day after the Guangming Daily here said flagging concern for safety and poor implementation of regulations had sparked significant rises in China's fatal accidents and fires this year.

In 1,811 industrial accidents during January and February, 1,757 people died.

The figures were up five per cent, 5.8 per cent and 9.3 per cent respectively compared to the first two months of 1995, it said.

The total number of fires in the first three months of 1996 was 13,327. A total of 699 people were killed and 805 injured in the fires which caused 268 million yuan (\$32.3 million) in damage, it said.

The accidents and hazards were caused by a lack of safety measures, a low awareness of existing safety regulations, poor management and a shortage of funds, it said.

Hanoi welcomes newly nominated U.S. ambassador

HANOI (R) — Vietnam gave a swift official welcome Saturday to the nomination of former Vietnam War veteran Douglas "Pete" Peterson as the first United States ambassador to Hanoi.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman, reading from a prepared statement, described the move as "an active step contributing towards the further development of relations between the two countries."

He said Vietnam was "actively preparing" to appoint its own ambassador to Washington.

The nomination of Mr. Peterson, 60, a Florida Democrat and former fighter pilot who spent 6-1/2 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, was announced by White House spokesman David Johnson Friday.

Mr. Johnson told reporters the prospective ambassador's first priority would be the "fullest possible accounting" of American servicemen still listed as missing from the Vietnam War which ended in 1975.

But Mr. Peterson's nomination, which has been widely expected for several months, still has to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

United States officials have indicated the confirmation process could be difficult because of sensitivities over both the missing-in-action issue and the broader issue of policy towards a former enemy.

Mr. Peterson is expected to clear the way for sending an ambassador by certifying soon, possibly as early as next week, that Vietnam is "cooperating in full faith" with efforts to answer the remaining questions about Americans still missing from the war.

A U.S. military spokeswoman in Hanoi said Saturday that according to figures issued in March some 2,154 U.S. servicemen were still listed as missing-in-action in Indochina with 1,609 in Vietnam.

Most are known to have died but their remains have not been found.

The United States and Vietnam normalised diplomatic ties in July last year. The first U.S. embassy in Hanoi was officially opened a few weeks later in August during a visit by Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

But despite those moves, the former adversaries have not yet reached agreement on full economic and trade normalisation. In addition, a series of hardline Vietnamese statements in recent months has indicated lingering distrust.

Newspaper commentaries in state-controlled dailies have repeatedly accused the United States of seeking to undermine Hanoi's Communist leadership through "peaceful evolution" — a term used by Vietnam to mean backdoor subversion.

In private, Vietnamese officials also accuse Washington of being unreasonable in its trade negotiations with Hanoi, which have focused most recently on the protection of copyright.

If successful, Mr. Peterson's appointment would mark the first time the United States has had an ambassador in Hanoi.

Washington had a consulate in Hanoi prior to 1954. The last American ambassador to Vietnam was posted in Saigon, the capital of U.S.-backed South Vietnam.



French troops unload bags belonging to French civilians whom they have taken to the Bangui Airport in army trucks to be evacuated to Paris (Reuters photo)

France, U.S. assess rescue missions outside Bangui

BANGUI (R) — France and the United States are considering rescue missions to evacuate Westerners trapped in the interior of the turbulent Central African Republic by an army mutiny.

A French military spokesman said French troops had brought out most of the foreigners who wanted to leave Bangui, the devastated capital, and were now studying ways to reach those in other parts of the country.

The United States, which landed Marines in Bangui after soldiers mutinied against President Ange-Felix Patasse a week ago, offered to provide helicopters to rescue people from the sparsely-populated interior.

"It appears to be calm in the interior but there is a chance there could be revenge attacks," the French military spokesman said.

Bangui, a city of 500,000 people, seemed to be quieter Friday as French troops patrolled. But central stores had been looted, bodies littered the streets and a Red Cross worker told Radio France Internationale: "The morgues are full."

Residents in the east-central town of Bambara, 400 kilometres from Bangui, reported anti-French marches similar to violent protests in the capital against France's military intervention to back Mr. Patasse.

French troops opened fire Friday to break up one of three protest marches in Bangui which defied a ban by the authorities of gatherings of more than five people.

U.S. embassy spokeswoman June Carter said 93 Americans had been airlifted to Cameroon, leaving 172 U.S. citizens of whom 33 were in the embassy including its staff of nine.

"We are not allowing anyone to move without being in an armoured vehicle," Ms. Carter told Reuters by telephone.

French troops based in the Central African Republic under defence accords were reinforced by units from France and garrisons in Africa to intervene on the side of Mr. Patasse, who survived a pay revolt by soldiers barely a month ago.

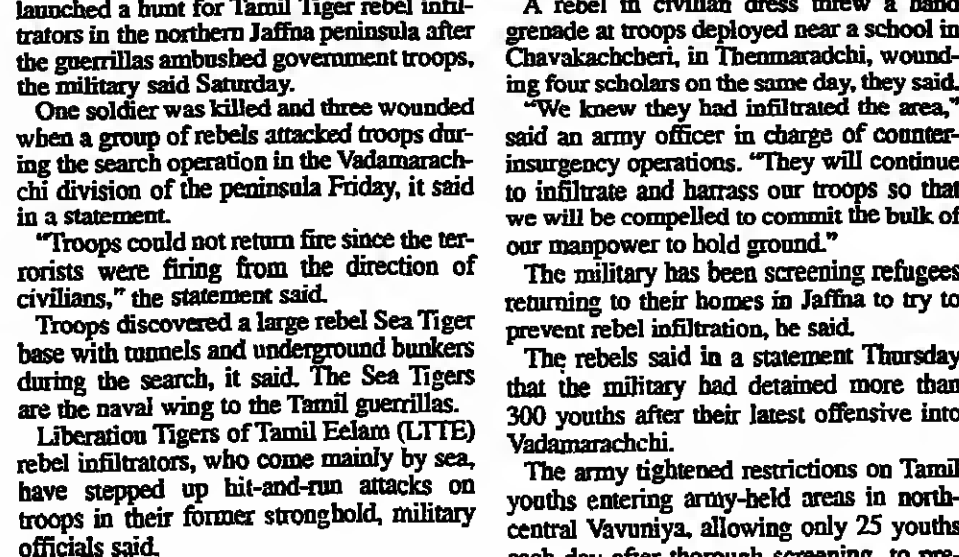
France, the former colonial power, used the Central African Republic as a strategic base to defend Chad against Libyan incursions and Bangui served as a rear supply base for a French operation in Rwanda in 1994.

Mr. Patasse, softening a hardline stance as protests persisted against him and his French backers, proposed a broader government and a national conference on the armed forces.

"In the exceptional circumstances which the country finds itself, I call for an assembly of all with the view to establishing a broad-based government, one of whose tasks will be to organise a national forum on defence in order to make our army a combat army," he said in a statement.

But, interviewed on French television, Mr. Patasse said he would not resign. Only a handful of mutineers, rather than a majority of the people, wanted his resignation, he said.

"The nature of the mutiny has changed," he said. "It has become a movement of rebellion against the established authorities."



French troops help a little girl into an army truck to be taken to the Bangui airport to be evacuated with other French civilians to Paris. Violence continued as rebellious soldiers challenged the authority of President Ange-Felix Patasse (Reuters photo)

Sri Lanka troops hunt Tiger rebels in Jaffna

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan troops have launched a hunt for Tamil Tiger rebel infiltrators in the northern Jaffna peninsula after the guerrillas ambushed government troops, the military said Saturday.

One soldier was killed and three wounded when a group of rebels attacked troops during the search operation in the Vadamarachchi division of the peninsula Friday, it said in a statement.

"Troops could not return fire since the terrorists were firing from the direction of civilians," the statement said.

Troops discovered a large rebel Sea Tiger base with tunnels and underground bunkers during the search, it said. The Sea Tigers are the naval wing to the Tamil Tigers.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebel infiltrators, who come mainly by sea, have stepped up hit-and-run attacks on troops in their former stronghold, military officials said.

One rebel was killed and his body recovered by troops in an ambush in the Thennaradchi division of the Jaffna peninsula, south of Vadamarachchi, also Friday, the statement said.

Russians, Chechens to meet Monday but war rumbles on

VORKUTA, Russia (R) — Chechen rebel leaders will meet the Russian government Monday, President Boris Yeltsin said, but fighting ground on and Moscow's hawkish defence minister said the talks would not bring peace.

Mr. Yeltsin, who is banking on the talks to help win reelection in three weeks' time, sounded optimistic when he confirmed the meeting during a campaign trip to the Arctic town of Vorkuta.

"On Monday, we will be at the negotiating table... With the leadership of the government and representatives of those armed forces," he said. "I think we will reach an agreement on a full cessation of all armed conflict."

On Thursday he said rebel leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev had accepted an invitation to Moscow for talks and declared "the ice has broken" in the 17-month conflict which has cost him much of the liberal support that swept him to the Kremlin in 1991.

The talks are intended initially to renew a military accord reached last summer but never implemented. It foresaw Russian troop withdrawals in return for rebel disarmament and left the thorny question of Chechnya's political status to one side.

The mere fact of talks constitutes progress since the rebels had been refusing to negotiate until troops were pulled out.

A rebel military commander, Daud Akhmadov, was quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency as saying the separatists were now "ready not only for dialogue but sensible compromise".

But the independence issue is no simpler now than a year ago. Mr. Yeltsin said he would not accept the separatists' ultimate demand — outright secession. Moscow fears that could start the unravelling of the whole of the multi-ethnic Russian Federation.

"Of course we won't give Chechnya away. Chechnya will remain part of Russia. Russia is and will be united and indivisible," the president told a crowd in the grimy coalmining town.

Mr. Yeltsin's confidence in achieving a ceasefire was also thrown into doubt by his own defence minister, Pavel Grachev, and complaints from the separatists that the Russian army was still on the attack and trying to wreck the peace process.

The paratroop general echoed Mr. Yeltsin's main political rival, Communist candidate Gennady Zyuganov, in saying the negotiations were doomed to failure and that peace could only come to Chechnya once the rebels had been "completely annihilated".

"I do not believe in this," TASS quoted the hawkish Grachev as saying in Siberia when asked if the talks would succeed.

Yeltsin tries to win votes in Arctic Russia

VORKUTA, Russia (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin, buoyed by a risky gamble on peace in Chechnya, bids Saturday to win back the support of a mining community beyond the Arctic Circle whose support helped him win power.

The 65-year-old, running for a second term in the June 16 poll against Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, will decide this weekend whether to go ahead with a risky bid to hold direct talks in the Kremlin with the leader of the Chechen rebels.

Vorkuta coalminers originally backed Mr. Yeltsin in his efforts to replace the Soviet-era centralised economy with a Western-style market and to destroy Communist one-party rule which ended in a collapse of the superpower in late 1991.

But market reforms proved fatal for the coal centre some 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, built some 60 years ago as an island in the Gulag Archipelago of dictator Josef Stalin's dreaded prison camps. Its coal turned out to be too expensive, its infrastructure not worth maintaining.

Most of Vorkuta's mines continue working though salary delays have become routine. Just a day before Mr. Yeltsin's arrival the miners were paid their February wages but with little hope of getting their March, April and May money soon.

Economic hardships and worsening social conditions have led to a dramatic change in the mood of miners. "We all believed that that something would come out of it," editor of the local newspaper Zapolarye Alexander Tretyakov told Reuters. "But now everyone is disappointed."

At his previous stop in the northern port of Arkhangelsk Friday Mr. Yeltsin made clear he was relying on sweeteners to win back the voters' support.

"I've come with full pockets," Mr. Yeltsin told voters. "Today a little money will be coming into Arkhangelsk region."

Apart from the hardships of reforms, Mr. Yeltsin's once high popularity has suffered most from his highly unpopular campaign in Chechnya, launched in December 1994 to quell the region's independence bid.

On Thursday Mr. Yeltsin unexpectedly announced that he had invited Chechen separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev to Moscow for talks on ending the conflict which had killed more than 30,000 people.

Interfax News Agency quoted well-informed sources in Moscow as saying that the talks might take place as early as Monday, a date also mentioned by Chechen rebel Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov in an interview with the Paris newspaper Le Figaro.

But the agency added that Mr. Yeltsin would make a final decision after Prime Minister Chernomyrdin briefs him at Moscow's government airport immediately after the president's arrival in Moscow late Saturday.

Reports about peace talks coincided with heavy fighting in western Chechnya where Russian forces stormed the last rebel stronghold of Bamut. Russian military officials said the former missile base fell Friday but separatists denied this.

If Yeltsin can keep the peace process alive, at least until the likely second round of the election in early July, some political analysts believe it will be his trump card. But failure could rebound on his chances.

White House attacks 'spitball politics' of Dole

WASHINGTON (R) — The White House charged Friday that a desperate Bob Dole and other Republicans are engaging in "spitball politics" against President Bill Clinton with a coordinated series of personal attacks.

"This campaign turned very nasty and very ugly very quickly once the Republicans became desperate about their situation," White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters.

Sen. Dole, the prospective Republican presidential nominee, and Mr. Clinton engaged in the most heated political fight of the 1996 campaign Thursday when Sen. Dole said the Democratic president had "pushed the limits of decency too far" by vetoing a bill that would have banned a type of late-stage abortion.

Mr. Clinton lashed back with an angry, finger-pointing response at a news conference: "I am always a little sceptical when politicians piously proclaim their morality."

Other Republicans have pounced gleefully on a legal brief filed by a Clinton attorney, Robert Bennett, in a sexual harassment suit filed by a former Arkansas state employee.

Mr. Bennett's brief, filed with the Supreme Court this month, argues that Mr. Clinton's status as commander-in-chief could be grounds for delaying the suit until after he leaves office. It cites as one possible basis for such a claim a law that protects active-duty military personnel from having to defend themselves in civil suits.

Gen. Grachev said Mr. Yandarbiyev was in a weaker position than his predecessor Dzhokar Dudayev, who was killed a month ago, and did not have the power to impose peace on the rebel fighters.

Among those, Gen. Grachev noted, was Shamil Basayev, who led a bloody raid into southern Russia last June. He was an "outright terrorist" who would fight to the end because he knew the Russians would show him "no mercy and no forgiveness."

Russian media have speculated Mr. Yeltsin may sack the loyal but unpopular Gen. Grachev before or after the June 16 election.

The Russian military command in Chechnya said it had started "mopping up" operations in the south and southeast of the province after reporting the seizure Friday of a last rebel stronghold, the former missile base of Bamut in the West.

Rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov told Ekho Moskvy radio: "Stepping up military operations in Chechnya, certain forces in Moscow are trying to wreck Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Yandarbiyev's meeting."

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin met key ministers and officials Saturday to prepare the summit and reviewed documents that may be signed there, Interfax News Agency said.

Meanwhile Russian forces Saturday launched an offensive in the south and southeast of Chechnya to "liquidate groups" of rebels holding out in these zones, Interfax said, citing the Russian military command in Chechnya.

Russian troops had "begun operations to liquidate groups of bandits in the hills in the regions of Chatoi and Vedeno," the source said. Moscow refers to Chechen rebels as "bandits."

Vedeno, which is about 60 kilometres southeast of the capital Grozny, is one of the final Chechen rebel strongholds after Bamut, in the west, fell after a fierce, week-long assault Friday.

Using military terms without elaborating, the report said federal troops were conducting "clean-up" operations in Khadij-Yurt and Tsa-Vedeno, two villages near Vedeno.

The term "clean-up" has been used by Russians since the start of the bloody, 17-month war to refer to both offensive operations including bombings and assaults to drive rebels out of villages.

The last news from both villages a few weeks ago had said Khadij-Yurt was under rebel control though the Russians had taken over Tsa-Vedeno.

Earlier Saturday, rebel sources cited by the Interfax agency said Moscow's troops were moving in on the town of Vedeno and that civilians were already fleeing the town, fearing a Russian assault.

40 divers seek bodies on Tanzanian ferry

MWANZA, Tanzania (R) — Foreign divers Saturday joined a recovery operation on Lake Victoria to retrieve some 1,000 dead from the sunken Tanzanian ferry Bukoba as this lakeside town prepared for a mass funeral of more than 100 victims.

"We think there's more than 1,000 bodies aboard," said Salim Virani, a boat contractor coordinating volunteer rescue operations, after hearing reports from a support ship.

Officials at Mwanza Port said 16 Kenyan and 25 South African Navy divers had arrived in Mwanza to reinforce the dangerous and difficult operation.

"What we have here is specialised equipment, 25 divers and a medical team," said South African Navy Captain Jack Beacon.

Divers said more expertise was needed because bodies trapped in the ferry since it sank Tuesday would start to decompose badly. Many would probably never be raised as

parts of the wreck were too dangerous.

The Bukoba was lying on its port side under 27 metres of water after East Africa's worst shipping disaster.

Divers entered the ferry and recovered 158 bodies Friday. Some survivors estimated that 1,000 or more passengers were crowded on to the ferry, which had a legal capacity of 430.

Government officials said a mass funeral would be held in Mwanza Saturday for victims recovered so far.

Twenty-eight bodies were recovered before Friday. A total of 114 survivors are officially listed but the ship's owners say others may not have notified authorities that they were rescued.

In Brussels, officials said Belgium had launched an inquiry into why vital stabilisation work was not carried out on the Belgian-built ferry, which was commissioned in 1979.

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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 684311, 699634
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO
Facsimile: 696183

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Veil of 986 and beyond

IF IT turns out to be true that Iraq's acceptance of the oil-for-food deal under Security Council Resolution 986 was made possible by reassurances from France, Russia, China and Egypt that this would be a step towards lifting totally the U.N.-imposed sanctions, then the accord makes more sense than hitherto believed. The initial euphoria generated by the deal quickly gave way to fears that allowing Baghdad to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months (to import basic commodities, defray the expenses of the international organisation and pay compensations to victims of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait) could serve as an excuse to perpetuate the sanctions regime. And the swift shift in perceptions towards the agreement was in fact most natural since providing for food and medicine to flow again into the hardship-stricken country was easily capable of reducing international pressure for ending the punitive measures as soon as it was announced.

But now, it seems, there is more to the U.N.-Iraqi deal than meets the eye. Baghdad had resisted pressures to yield to Resolution 986 on the grounds that its implementation in the manner suggested would infringe on Iraq's sovereignty and would not provide people with the needed panacea. This concern has been vindicated by the realisation that the Iraqi people would actually benefit from less than half of the revenues of oil sold under the agreed-upon terms between the two sides. The lopsided distribution of the oil sales revenue makes a mockery of the claims that the U.N. had the welfare of the Iraqi people on top of its priorities when it articulated the deal with Baghdad.

The unfairness of the accord, though, would indeed dissipate if the said promise to eventually lift the embargo against Iraq is not honoured. Iraq has largely met U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 and deserves to be recognised for what it has done. But even if the international community continues to uphold the conviction that Iraqi cooperation with the U.N. has never been exemplary, the fact remains that it has performed reasonably well under the terms of Resolution 687.

Maintaining the sanctions on Iraq will definitely put more pressure on the Iraqi regime to comply fully with all U.N. resolutions. But that objective is being achieved at a very high cost for the Iraqi people, who are victims of the faulty policies of a regime which they did not elect in the first place. The world must continue to work for positive change in Iraq. But surely there are other ways to do that than starving the Iraqis. The sanctions should thus be eased to the extent that they would not go on punishing the Iraqi people and depriving them of their right to food and medicine. But that is only one side of the formula. The second is the responsibility of the Iraqi regime to its people and to the international community. The sanctions cannot be fully lifted before Iraq meets all its obligations under U.N. resolutions. Arguments that some of these resolutions are not fair are not as strong as saying true responsibilities must be borne by the Iraqi regime itself.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily commented on Prime Minister Abdul Karim Khabiri's tour around the Kingdom by saying that the latter place him face to face with the realities on the ground. It is not enough for the government to learn about the situation from behind closed doors or from people who seek their own selfish interests; it should rather visit various areas of the country and hear the demands and the grievances of the various communities, said Sultan Al Hattah. When the prime minister tours different areas in the country, he will realise that there are many outstanding problems and the public complaints about several issues, starting with the disruption of water supplies to difficulties in marketing agricultural produce, have not been addressed, said the writer. By discussing these issues with the local people, the prime minister might offer ideas or hear suggestions from the public that can help the government deal with many issues at hand, he added.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i said that the Arab and Islamic nations have no alternative to solidarity and alliance in the face of the forces of evil and those powers that do not conceal their enmity to the Arab Nation. Salah Jarar said that it is inevitable for the Arab states to return to collective action and to solidarity among themselves so that they can stop the foreign powers from looting their wealth and end occupation of their lands. There can be no alternative to logic and sense and an end to the inter-Arab differences that have plagued the nation for many years, he continued. The writer said that the Arabs should learn from history and heed their predecessors' advice so as to no fall victim to the new colonialist powers' greed. The way out of the present political and economic predicaments facing the nation, he said, is solidarity and a united front in the face of the aggressors.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Government's performance after 100 days — an assessment

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

THE ONE hundred-day grace period given to the new government has lapsed, and the observers are starting to make their evaluations. The Centre of Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan is conducting a telephone survey of public opinion leaders to find out how the government of Abdul Karim Khabiri fares among the people and how its performance so far is perceived by the political elite.

The 100-day grace period granted to new governments does not mean that the government should implement its programme and achieve its objectives in such a short period of time. Would that be the case, governments would resign, other governments would take over and would present a follow-up programme achievable in another 100-day period.

The grace period is meant to be a honeymoon, during which the journalists and the opposition refrain from criticising the new government. They agree to give the new team some breathing time to study and plan without having to worry about blows on their backs.

Now that the government has passed the 100-day milestone, it is only normal that it should undergo evaluation and critique from supporters and opposers alike. However, those who like to criticise the policies and decisions

taken by the government so far should provide their own alternative policies and decisions.

It is not enough to say that the government did not do much to combat poverty, unemployment or corruption. The opposers to the government should tell us what it should have done. Criticism is not merely to throw mud in the face of the ministers, it should be accompanied by constructive and practical suggestions and alternative approaches at the political, economic and social levels.

From a purely economic point of view, I have a favourable opinion of the government's performance so far, not because of what it has already done (as it actually did very little) but because of what it did not do.

The government did not sever or worsen the vital economic relations with Iraq. It did not step up the differences. In spite of the pronouncements to the press, which may have been meant for external consumption, about the desirability or the inevitability of change in the regime in Iraq, the economic aspects remained stable. Jordanian goods continued to flow to the Iraqi market, albeit at lower level, and Jordan continued to import all its growing needs of petroleum from Iraq at a concessional price, roughly half the prevailing price in the international oil market.

Had the government hurt these economic relations as we feared, it would have sacrificed and hurt the real national interests of the Jordanians in return for fictitious interests. Fortunately it did not commit this costly mistake, and therefore it deserves a positive evaluation.

The near rebuke with which the government was met from Israel, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait and several factions of the so-called Iraqi opposition may press the government to reevaluate the whole Arab position and rediscover Iraq anew, as Iraq is the real depth of Jordan for which there is no equal or substitute.

The normal and strong relations which Jordan has had with Iraq for over 15 years gave the Jordanian role a regional and international extra weight. These relations assured the Jordanian decision makers that their backs are safe, Jordanian borders are untouchable, Jordan's independence is immune, and any aggression against Jordan would be costly.

Based on the above, I give my vote of confidence to the government of Mr. Khabiri.

Waiting for the bomb

By Gwynne Dyer

I AM writing this article before the bomb goes off. If it does not go off before 29 May, Prime Minister Shimon Peres' Labour Party will probably win the Israeli election. But if it does, then Likud wins, and the peace is off.

"I know that many of you live in fear — fear of boarding a bus, fear of sending the children to school," says Likud's leader Benjamin Netanyahu in his campaign TV spots. "There is a sense that the next attack is on the way, it's only a matter of time." It is a delicate business talking about the next bomb to shell-shocked Israelis, but Netanyahu has developed the skill, because his victory depends on a terrorist attack that kills lots of Israelis.

There are other impending elections where a big bomb may punctuate the campaign. The Israelis are likely to end their self-restraint and blow up a big bomb in Moscow to ruin Russian President Boris Yeltsin's reelection bid. It was Yeltsin who started the war against them, and even a

Communist government might be ready to make peace. But that bomb will not come until the run-off election in July.

London may be hit by another big bomb before the Ulster election on May 30, and Delhi is likely to see one or more bombs before the vote in the separatist state of Kashmir on the same day. But these are essentially marginal struggles, and will not affect the composition or policies of the British or Indian governments.

The Israeli case is different. The election is almost exclusively about the present government's policy of making peace with the Palestinians, even at the price of giving them back some of their land. And that is what the bombs are about, too.

Prime Minister Peres, buoyed by a wave of sympathy because of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination by a right-wing Jewish fanatic in November, was running on an easy election victory until four bombs killed 59 Israelis between Feb. 25 and March 4. The bombers, all members of militant groups linked to Hamas, the

Palestinian Islamic movement that opposes peace with Israel, wanted to stop the peace process — and they are having some success.

After the bombs, Netanyahu surged ahead of Peres in the polls. Peres drew abreast again after two weeks, but he has been unable to open up a significant lead over his rival. Nassim Zivli, secretary-general of the Labour Party, warns bluntly that it will not be possible for Peres to hold or regain the lead if there is a big bomb causing lots of deaths in the last week of the campaign.

Which means, in effect, that Israelis have banded over the decision on whether they will continue or abandon their 5-year quest for a general Arab-Israeli peace to a couple of dozen teenage Palestinian suicide-bombers and a few older planners and bomb-makers hiding in the back-alley warrens of Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem and elsewhere. No sane country would want to be in such a situation, and the Israelis certainly did not choose it. But they are so closely divided on the wisdom of making peace with the Palestinian

Liberation Organisation and its leader, Yasser Arafat, that the election will be decided by as few as 150,000 swing voters.

These people, who desperately want peace but fear that Peres' strategy cannot deliver it, have already shown that they can be stampeded by a single big bomb. So the Labour government must pull out all the stops to forestall that bomb — and Likud must secretly count on a calamity that it could never deliberately hope for.

Will there be a bomb, then? The odds are about even.

There was almost one in the middle of last month, though it did not involve Hamas or other Palestinians. A Lebanese called Hussein Mikdad, associated with the Iranian-backed group Hizbollah, managed to enter Israel on a stolen British passport. On April 12, both his legs and one hand were blown off while trying to assemble a bomb in his hotel in Jerusalem.

Given the small amount of explosives in Mikdad's possession, the Israeli intelligence believes that

Hizbollah intended to use the bomb on an outbound El Al flight, where the security might be less strict than on inbound flights. But the Palestinian groups connected to Hamas are still in play, even though yet another "master-mind" has been eliminated.

Hassan Salameh, alleged to have planned three of this year's suicide bombings in Israel, was wounded and subsequently arrested by the Israeli army in Hebron on May 18. But that arrest will no more end the bombs than the booby-trapped cell-phone that killed the previous "master bomber", Yahya Ayash, in January.

It was Yahya Ayash's killing that triggered the subsequent wave of suicide bombings in which Hassan Salameh played such a prominent role — and the latter's removal will not change the pattern either. "Master bombers" are about as indispensable as junior officers in the army: all they need is courage, passable leadership skills, and a knowledge of simple machines. There will be another along in a minute.

The Israeli government,

which closed the borders of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to most Palestinian workers employed in Israel after the February bombs, has now sealed them off completely. Virtually nothing and nobody will get through until the election is over. And yet they still cannot guarantee that there will not be another bomb. Even odds — and if there is a bomb, Netanyahu and Likud win the election.

Netanyahu's slogan is "Making a secure peace," but he has pledged to oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state, expand Jewish settlements on the West Bank, and give the Israeli army "complete freedom of action" to pursue militants through all the territories that the present Israeli government has banded over to Palestinian rule.

Three months of that, and Arafat and the PLO would have to relinquish peace with Israel, of face being overthrown by their own people. No wonder Hamas is trying so hard to help Likud. But it is amazing that Israel's fate depends on such a trivial chance.

Honey, I've been sued by the kids

By Tony Allen-Mills

PAY ATTENTION, children. It is time to learn your ABCs. No, no, not that silly apple, banana and cat nonsense. We're talking about the real ABCs you seem to need these days, just to get through kindergarten. As in A is for attorney, B is for bailiff and C is for constitutional rights.

America's kids are going to court. They are suing their school teachers, their baby-sitters and even their own parents. Some of them are being sued in return. To the despair of a legal profession already

deeply diseased by idiotic adult acrimony, the rise of the litigious toddler is turning justice into a joke.

Jonathan gave Stacey a kick. Stacey's mother promptly told him to stop. Jonathan's mother intervened and told Stacey's mother to shut up. So Stacey's mother went to court. "I found it a necessary step," Antonia Pevnev primly said.

After a titanic clash in Suffolk Superior Court, Pevnev succeeded in winning a civil injunction keeping Jonathan away from her daughter. Judge Charles Spurlock a solemn restraining order: "The defendant and plaintiff be enjoined and restrained from having any verbal contact with one another."

Roderick MacLeish, a prominent Boston advocate, weeps into his metaphorical wig. "We're a litigious society, it's part of our culture," he says. "But if we have reached the point where 3-year-olds are seeking restraining orders — and judges are granting them — then we need to take a serious look at what's going on in this country."

Theo Schaars, a Dallas diamond broker, couldn't agree more. He and his wife, Mackie, left their son, Connor, 4, with a baby-sitter, Erica Bailey. Connor had clearly failed to read the Texas State Judicial Statutes regarding acceptable 4-year-old behaviour toward baby-sitters. He promptly slugged Bailey in the throat.

Bailey, 21, is now suing the boy and his parents for \$2 million. "The baby-sitter says Connor gave her a crushed larynx and other injuries, and that she can no longer work, attend college, or lead a normal

life," says Mackie Schaars. The lawsuit seeks \$1 million in compensation for the pain and suffering Bailey already claims to have endured.

apartment exploded. And Jimmy Hines, 13, has spent the past four years fighting through the Indiana courts for the right to wear an earring to school.

"America's kids are going to court. They are suing their school teachers, their playmates, their baby-sitters and even their own parents. Some of them are being sued in return. To the despair of a legal profession already deeply diseased by idiotic adult acrimony, the rise of the litigious toddler is turning justice into a joke."

and \$1 million for future suffering. She says she has been left with a permanently "raspy" voice.

So who is this Connor guy? Some kind of ninja karate toddler tearaway who beats up women four times his size for fun? "Actually one of his teachers says he's one of the sweetest children she has ever worked with," says Schaars. The case goes to trial this month.

Then there was the case of Philip Garner, aged 10, who is suing his landlord for \$100,000 for the trauma he suffered when the lavatory in his Bronx

Johnny Lupoli, 9, was sued last month by a woman who was hit by a baseball he threw during Little League practice.

Carol Larosa was sitting in the stand, and sued on the grounds that Lupoli had thrown the baseball at a "hard and dangerous speed." The judge took the view that spectators do not attend baseball games in order to see balls thrown at a soft and harmless speed. He dismissed the case. "Johnny was just being a little boy," Lupoli's mother adds.

But in modern America, alas, "just being a little

boy" is sometimes no excuse. According to Bailey's lawsuit, the Schaars couple specifically have warned her that Connor had a "dangerous propensity to act recklessly." It will be up to a Dallas judge to decide if being a 4-year-old boy is not in itself sufficient warning of dangerous or reckless propensities.

Some lawyers believe the only way of stopping this trend in its toddler tracks will be to adopt the British requirement that the losers of civil lawsuits be obliged to pay the winners' costs. At present, almost any American litigant can find a lawyer desperate enough for clients to take on the case for a percentage of any winnings. Anyone can go to court confident that a loss will not cost them a single cent.

Other senior lawyers believe that the rush to court to settle child-related disputes is yet another sorry sign of collapsing family values and monetary greed. The chance to sue for damages is viewed by countless litigants as a path to easy riches; less scrupulous lawyers themselves encourage the trend with aggressive advertisement-chasing urging any victim of a mishap, however minor or seemingly accidental, to seek legal advice.

Michael J. Donovan, a Massachusetts clerk-magistrate for civil cases, says: "The courts are really a dumping ground for some people. These (Pevnev and Inge) couldn't cope with their disagreement and they are

setting a bad example for their kids. This case is more about the parents than about those 3-year-olds."

The trend to toddler tort is scarcely hindered by revisions of legal statutes in several states to enable children to sue their own parents. Concerned about children's rights to compensation in injury cases, the Ohio supreme court abolished parental immunity from their offspring's lawsuits 10 years ago. Other states followed suit. Since then, a number of children have sued their parents for injuries suffered in car accidents, and one 5-year-old was allowed to sue his father for the careless operation of a power lawnmower that accidentally bumped into the son.

While some lawyers insist that the number of frivolous lawsuits is exaggerated by the media, there have been enough bizarre cases for some parents to wonder if they need to have a lawyer standing by every time little Timmy throws a snowball.

Did I mention throwing a snowball? Two weeks ago, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit against the school and police departments in Cranston, Rhode Island, over a 1993 incident in which a 9-year-old girl was suspended from her class and taken to police headquarters for questioning.

What was Monica Dorney's offence? She threw a snowball at a classmate. In Cranston, that earns you a lawyer.

The Sunday Times



Syrians to stay, Lebanon says

(Continued from page 1)

pension of negotiations in Washington.

"Not wanting new witnesses who could accuse it of crimes and (ceasefire) violations in South Lebanon, Israel is deliberately impeding the formation of a committee by making unacceptable propositions," the government daily Tishrin said.

According to the newspaper, "Israel is responsible for the slowness of the discussions in Washington."

Negotiations on terms for monitoring a ceasefire in South Lebanon were suspended Thursday as Israel awaited instructions from its

government, diplomats in Washington said.

The group has been working for more than two weeks to hammer out how they will oversee the April 26 ceasefire in South Lebanon between the Israeli army and Hizbollah guerrillas.

The accord ending 17 days of fighting was brokered after the massacre of more than 100 Lebanese civilians who had fled their homes to avoid the Israeli barrage but were shelled in a U.N. camp.

Under the agreement, Israel and the Hizbollah pledged not to target civilians or the border area but have the right to defend themselves if attacked.

France mourns Trappist monks

(Continued from page 1)

"barbaric act contrary to the values of Islam, its spirituality and its openness to all other religions, and goes against respect for the innocent, notably religious men."

Iran also condemned the killings, with Radio Tehran saying on Saturday that "the murder of seven French monks in Algeria is an inhuman act and is contrary to Islamic values."

The Palestinian Hamas movement also condemned the killings.

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) also condemned the "unjustified" murder.

"The AOHR is deeply saddened by and condemns the murder of the seven French monks," it said in a statement issued in Cairo.

"The excuses offered by the GIA in no way justify this attack on the lives of innocents and do not correspond with its Islamic slogans which rejects such abominable crimes," it said.

Israeli envoy tours disputed area

(Continued from page 1)

Turkish magazine suggest civilian authorities in Turkey had little say in its drafting.

In the latest sign of growing links between the two countries, Turkey sent its navy chief to Israel this week

for talks with his Israeli counterpart.

A naval component of the deal raises further the prospects that Syria, still in a state of war with Israel, could one day find itself pressured by the air and sea.

Turkish Islamists step up pressure

(Continued from page 1)

The government has been paralysed since the ruling 10 days ago, with Mr. Yilmaz, backed by President Suleyman Demirel, refusing to seek a new mandate.

By ignoring demands for his resignation, Mr. Yilmaz only slowed down the chain of events that appear headed for another round of political bargaining to try to piece together another government.

"Turkey never saw such dirty political games," said Imren Aykut, state minister and deputy chairwoman of Mr. Yilmaz' Motherland Party.

It was not clear if Mr. Yilmaz would submit his resignation Monday after he returns to Ankara from south-eastern Turkey.

Mrs. Ciller's True Path Party appeared supportive of Welfare's initiative.

The process of the no-confidence vote would take one to three weeks, Welfare and True Path votes would be sufficient to topple Mr. Yilmaz.

Turkish newspapers reported the resignation of Ayvaz Gokdemir, the second low-grade minister from Mrs. Ciller's wing to step down to pressure Mr. Yilmaz into resigning.

The coalition remained on its feet for the moment but urgent problems including thorny relations with neighbour Greece, rampant inflation and a 12-year-old Kurdish separatist campaign have gone largely unheeded.

Ex-emir's bank accounts frozen

(Continued from page 1)

signed an accord creating a joint council of businessmen. Mr. Musa told a press conference after the session that the two countries would also draw up "within the next three months an agreement on protecting investments and banning double taxation."

Cairo "looks forward to the future of relations between Egypt and Qatar and hopes these accords will translate in practical terms into a support for our excellent ties," Mr. Musa said.

"We will work to put agreements into action and live economic relations so that in a year we can ask ourselves what has been implemented and what our businessmen have done," Sheikh Hamed said.

The Qatari minister said he and Mr. Musa had also discussed "revitalisation of the

declaration of Damascus," adding "we hope the declaration will be put into action."

Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf states, including Qatar, agreed on the Damascus declaration after the 1990-91 Gulf war, but the cooperation accord's military provisions have never been put into effect.

Mr. Musa said earlier, quoted in the government daily Al Ahrar, that the meeting with the Qatari official was part of a series of bilateral meetings Egypt was holding with Arab to "reactivate relations."

The Egyptian prime minister has met in the past months with his Jordanian and Tunisian counterparts, and "in the coming weeks in June" similar "commissions" will be held with Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Libya, Mr. Musa said.

Peres, Netanyahu meet on TV

(Continued from page 1)

wing Jew. "We will deal with Jerusalem, personal security and the Golan Heights," Mr. Arad told army radio. "It will be an opportunity to receive answers to these questions from both candidates."

Mr. Peres and Mr. Netanyahu have made security the main issue in the wake of suicide bombings that killed 59 people in Israel in February and March.

Israel is deploying a 20,000-strong security force ahead of Wednesday's election and has tightened a three-month-old closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition to a ban on Palestinians working in Israel, the army also has barred them from their jobs in Jewish settlements in occupied territory.

Pollsters have said another

guerrilla attack in the final days of the campaign could cost Mr. Peres the election.

Mr. Shelves played down any expectations that the debate, in which each candidate will answer a moderator's 10 questions and then pose one of his own to his rival, would sway many voters.

"It won't have a great impact," he told army radio. "I think the overwhelming majority of the public, including the so-called floating voters, have already made up their minds."

Mr. Peres has a small lead over Mr. Netanyahu, known in Israel as a master of the television sound-bite, in opinion polls.

A Dahaf survey in the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper on Thursday put support for Mr. Peres at 50.3 per cent compared with 45.8 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu.

Independence Day — the time to recall the past, hope for a prosperous future

By Fawaz Khreisha

EACH YEAR every country in the world observes its own national day and Jordan's independence anniversary is for us the most important occasion because with it we recall the past, review the present and look with hope and aspirations towards a prosperous future.

The anniversary rekindles our feelings towards the late King Abdullah who founded the Kingdom and achieved its independence from Britain in 1946.

On this great day, we also remember the Hashemite leader, King Hussein, who has carried the Hashemite standards and those of the Great Arab Revolt and pursued the drive to achieve its objectives of liberation from colonialism and tyranny.

On this day, we remember the symbol of the nation: King Hussein and his near-miracle achievements that transformed Jordan into a great country in the eyes of the world.

The king has created modern Jordan from poverty and meagre resources and built the Kingdom from the sweat, the tears and the blood of the people who have always manifested keenness on attaining unity, freedom and better life. The King has taken this country from a state of backwardness, of dirt roads and near illiteracy to the age of culture, progress and modern technology and a world of industry, democracy, security, stability and a just and honourable peace.

On the Kingdom's golden jubilee we recall the greatest achievements of our leader who serves as a symbol of heroism and bravery in which we take pride. He has ended the Anglo-Jordanian treaty and Arabised the Jordanian Armed Forces, turning it into a shield that protects Jordan and its dignity.

This year, we all remember the great achievements of the king who has restored to the country its lost lands and water resources in the course of building a just and comprehensive peace in our region.



Let me relate a glimpse of my father's memories, those of the late Sheikh Barakat Trad Al Khreisha who served as the first bedouin soldier in the Jordanian Armed Forces and one who lived through the era that followed the arrival of the late Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein at Ma'an and later Amman, in 1921. His father, Trad Khreisha, was then one of the local leaders who went out to welcome the Hashemite prince and maintained with him a strong friendship since that moment and until his death.

It was due to this intimate friendship that Prince Abdullah used to pitch his tent in the spring of each year among the tents of the Khreisha tribes in Muwaqqar. This close friendship prompted Prince Abdullah to despatch Trad's son, Barakat, on a scholarship to study at the Salt Secondary School along with 10 other Jordanian tribal youths. These included Habes Majali, who later on became chief of staff of the Armed Forces.

After graduation, Barakat became the first Jordanian bedouin with some education.

In the 1920s, British troops were still stationed in Jordan and Iraq; and according to the memoirs of the late Sheikh Trad, Jordan had formed border police units to help ensure

stability and security in the Jordanian Badia regions, scene of tribal conflicts. At the time, most of the eastern parts of the Emirate of Jordan extending from Ramtha in the north to Ma'an in the south were under the control of the bedouin tribes and the emirate had no control over these areas despite the presence of the British troops in the Zarga camps.

In view of the confusion and the deterioration of security and stability in the Jordanian Badia, Prince Abdullah requested help from the British and the British officers suggested that the task be entrusted to John Glinb, a British officer who had lived among the bedouin tribes, spoke fluent bedouin Arabic and was respected by the Jordanian bedouins.

After meeting with Prince Abdullah, Glinb accepted the mission and soon paid a visit to the Bani Sakher Tribes of Al Khreisha and met with Trad Khreisha whom he asked to be the first soldier in a new force — the Badia units that were being formed.

It was in November of 1930 that Trad started the creation of the Badia force, very rapidly recruiting large numbers of Badia youths to join the units which later became a powerful military force to be reckoned with.

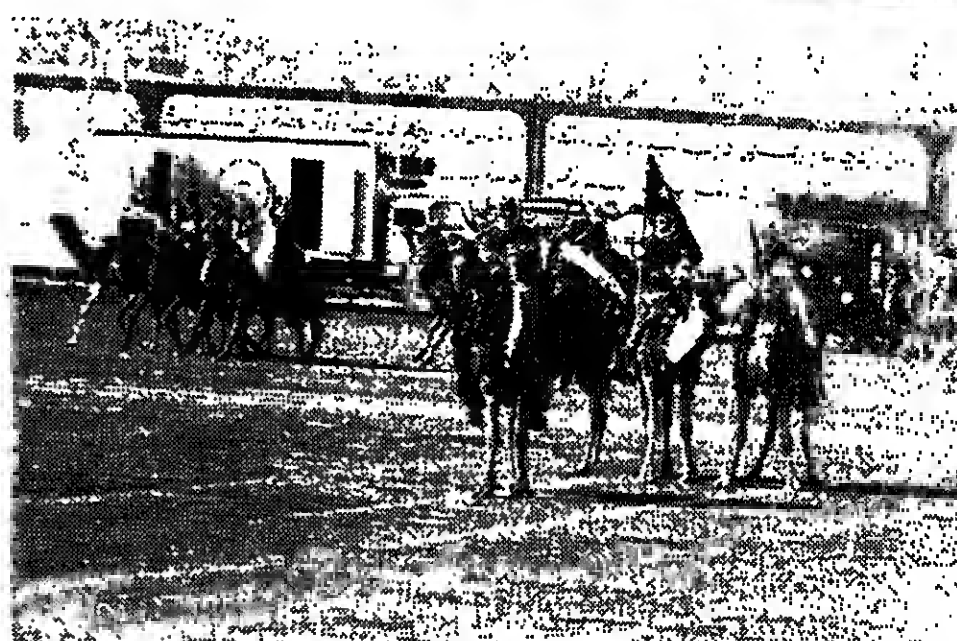
Badia units lived in tents, dressed in traditional dress, and used the camels as their main means of transport. They soon created Badia police stations like those at Bayer, Mudawwara, Rum, Al Azraq and Al Muwaqqar.

Glinb used to send rice, sugar, tea and coffee shipments to the Badia forces to distribute them to the tribes and so win their backing for their operations against smugglers and outlaws. This has enabled the Badia units to secure control and stability over the Jordanian Badia regions.

It was not long afterwards that the British asked Prince Abdullah to release five Badia police officers to help them create a similar force in Hadramout (Yemen) under the command of Barakat Khreisha.



Bedouin soldiers in the Jordanian Armed Forces (photos courtesy of Fawaz Khreisha)



And so they did, forming the nucleus of what later came to be known as the Southern Yemeni Army which, at the time, was still under British command.

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Jordanians, Israelis and Palestinians to meet on trade today

AMMAN (R) — Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian delegates will meet at a Jordan Dead Sea hotel Sunday to remove obstacles hindering trade and transport links, Jordanian officials said Saturday.

Amman says Israeli limitations, security restrictions and complicated routine procedures are hampering Jordan's trade with both the Jewish state and the potentially-lucrative market in Palestinian self-rule areas.

"Bilateral agreements are there, what we need is to clear technical obstacles to facilitate the travel of goods as a lot of the three parties are involved in many of these technical details," said one official.

Trade with Israel under a 1994 peace treaty has been "minimal" since a bilateral

agreement took effect in March, the officials said. Trucks carrying goods between Israel and Jordan are expected to start crossing borders next month, a much-needed step to boost trade exchanges.

Israel has also limited the number of Jordanian trucks allowed to transport goods across a rickety wooden Jordan River bridge linking the Kingdom and parts of the West Bank run by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), mainly to control security.

An Israeli-PNA phased-out free trade agreement also puts limits on foreign goods allowed into the West Bank and Gaza.

Out of 170 PNA-issued import licences in the last few months, 70 went to Jordanians, many of them of

Palestinian origin who are desperate to do business with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip because of historic and family links.

Jordan ruled the West Bank from 1950 until it lost it to Israel in 1967. But it still issues birth, death and marriage certificates and the dinar a main currency in circulation.

Amman is seeking to diversify markets to cushion the impact of any possible change in business with Iraq, its traditional partner, after it turned against President Saddam Hussein and began calling for change in Baghdad last year.

Its trade with most Gulf countries has picked up over the last three years after ties improved from strains caused by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Conference on Jordan economy opens today

By Francesca Ciriaci

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — Following up on last October's Middle East and North Africa economic summit, a four-day roundtable opening Sunday in Amman will analyse the Jordanian economy within its regional framework and will help formulate a future outlook for the Kingdom's economic development in all sectors.

Over 50 economists from Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen and United Arab Emirates, as well as experts from Germany and the U.S., will take part in the conference, which is organised by the Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Centre in collaboration with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Philadelphia University.

While Sunday's working sessions will provide a general outlook at the Jordanian and Arab economies, with the presentation of a paper by economic advisor and former minister Tayseer Abdul Jabbar, Monday's schedule will focus on the possible impacts of regional developments on the main sectors of the Jordanian economy, such as water and agriculture, industry and transportation, banks and trade as well as

tourism.

The conference will also point to the needs for change in the Kingdom's economic structure, with particular focus on the definition of the government's role in the liberalisation process and the identification of different measures to boost economic relations with Palestine and Israel.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is scheduled to address this morning's opening session, at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Working papers on the main sectors of the Jordanian economy will be presented by Jordanian and foreign scholars and researchers Monday.

Tuesday, the third day of the conference, Senator and former minister of information Jawad Anani will present a paper on "the requirements for structural changes in the Jordanian economy," while Noor Al Hussein Foundation director Ibrahim Badran will contribute to the fourth day's debate, focusing on the future economic relations between Jordan, Palestine and Israel.

The conference will close with a roundtable in which all participants will be able to propose their suggestions and remarks, to be studied in further workshops.

Japan stays world's largest creditor for fifth year

TOKYO (R) — Japan kept its status as the country with the largest amount of overseas assets for a fifth straight year in 1995, the finance ministry has said.

Net overseas holdings — the balance of assets and debts the government and private companies hold abroad — reached a record 76.99 trillion yen (\$719 billion at present exchange rates) at the end of 1995, the ministry said.

Assets grew in 1995 partly because investors in Japan, where interest rates are at record lows, put money into foreign stocks and bonds in a search for higher returns on investments.

Another reason was a steady migration of Japanese firms moving manufacturing bases overseas to take advantage of lower costs.

In 1994, net holdings stood at 66.81 trillion yen (\$624 billion), which was also a record.

The year-on-year increase of 15.2 per cent in 1995 was the largest since 1992, when net foreign assets rose by 35 per cent to 64.15 trillion yen (\$599 billion).

The government's foreign reserves soared in 1995 as the central bank, the Bank of Japan, repeatedly bought dollars for yen in currency markets to halt any dramatic rise in the yen.

Germany was the second-largest creditor nation with 17.35 trillion yen (\$162 billion) worth of net foreign assets at the end of June, followed by Britain, which had net overseas holdings of 2.76 trillion yen (\$25.7 billion) at the end of 1994.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Wright Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) New conditions are intriguing, however this is not the right day today to act upon them as yet or you could regret any decisions you might make especially business related. One from a distance could give you good ideas.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Use only tried and proven systems in dealing with others today and you will get good results from your efforts. Stick to proven pleasures with your mate and you will have fun in each others company, especially this evening.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A blunt fellow associate will expect you to keep some promise which you have made today, so do so before you go off a pleasure jaunt with your loved ones or close friends. Tonight you should be careful while on the highway.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be thoughtful of those who have done you favors prior to today and don't waste your time and money on newcomers who could only be out to destroy your reputation. Tonight is good for resting up for the next few days.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get into pleasures which have been enjoyable prior to today with close friends. Don't feel you have to do anything unusual to gain affection from your mate or loved ones since you already the center of their affection.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Continue with your policy at home today and don't spoil the harmony which has existed for some time there. Follow your pursuits with all enthusiasm and you will be able to achieve the success which you have desired.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Keep rooted to oldtime principles today which have worked to you for previously and don't chuck them away for new ones which could prove damaging to your career objectives or to your reputation.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Think about how you can make better use of your home today so that you can have a greater abundance in the days ahead. Later tonight you can be successful in your career activities by following the advice of some expert.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get into the amusements and pleasures with your mate today which have been found satisfactory in the days before. This evening you can provide your loved ones with the material items which they have found to be necessary.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Look to that loyal friend who has been of assistance to you prior to today during some emergency and you can rely on this individual at this time. This evening you should meet with an expert on advice for any difficulties.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Try to get your life working more as you want it to be at this time, and follow your personal desires with a vengeance. You can proceed with some new project later tonight with the help of some knowledgeable person.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Do something today which can be helpful in the community in which you reside, and by doing so you will be able to increase your reputation. Later tonight you can be of assistance to those who are having some difficulties.

Birthstone of May: Emerald

Citrine

Camdessus reappointed head of IMF for third term

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Michel Camdessus was reappointed Thursday for a third five-year term as managing director and chairman of the executive board at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Mr. Camdessus, 63, of France, was officially reappointed at an IMF board meeting with representatives of 181 member countries. First appointed in January 1987 as the seventh IMF chief, his second term was to expire in January 1997.

Elected unanimously, Mr. Camdessus becomes the first director to be given three terms at the IMF, which lends money to member governments as part of its goal to promote monetary cooperation and currency stabilisation.

There were no other candidates for the post, although press reports said others under consideration were Belgian Finance Minister Philippe Maystadt and former Dutch Finance Minister Ono Ruding, currently a Citicorp vice president.

Mr. Camdessus served as governor of the Bank of

France from 1984 to 1987, director of the French treasury from 1982 to 1984 and chairman of the Paris Club of bilateral creditors from 1978 to 1984.

In 1987 he succeeded another Frenchman, Jacques de Larosiere, as head of the international organisation. Traditionally, a European heads the IMF while an American leads its sister organisation, the World Bank.

"By temperament, he is an activist," noted former Federal Reserve chairman, Paul Volcker. "Without his active leadership the fund might have receded into desuetude."

Under his direction, the fund has faced two principal challenges — financial support for Mexico and Russia.

Mr. Camdessus remains particularly proud of the assistance accorded Mexico following its peso crisis of 1994.

"We may have saved Mexico," he has said. "But we also saved Latin America."

From that period, he can recall the "late nights and early mornings" of December

1994. With the peso collapsing and investors abandoning the Mexican market, Mr. Camdessus had to use all his powers of persuasion to get a loan for the country approved.

In the end, the IMF agreed to provide Mexico with \$17.3 billion to avert a crisis in emerging markets that could have had repercussions not only in Latin America but also in Asia, according to the director.

In the aftermath of the drama, during a period of self-criticism, fund officials asked themselves how they could not have foreseen the collapse of the peso.

Mr. Camdessus, while in principle an advocate of greater transparency in the operation of the IMF, nonetheless decided not to release the results of the inquiry.

The director also mobilised the IMF to come to the aid of former Soviet bloc countries that were moving toward market economies. In March the fund accorded a second \$10 billion loan to Russia.

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JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RECEL
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YEMBOR
WINUSE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here:

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: FEIGN OCTET MODISH POROUS
 Answer: Often the result of blowing your own horn — SOUR NOTES

THE Daily Crossword by Alvin L. Becker

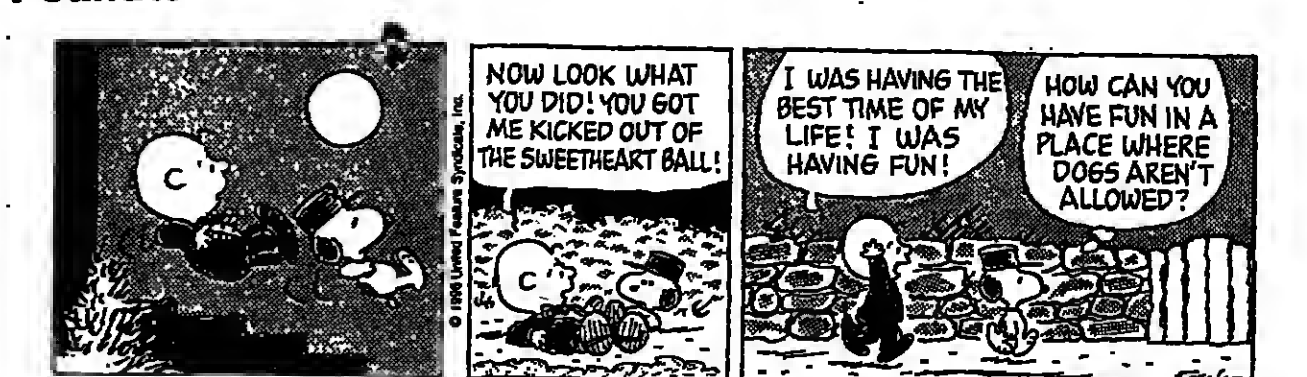
ACROSS

- Rumple
- Long tales
- Advantage
- Vicinity
- "Saratoga"
- Medical photo
- Yemen city
- Argonne Forest river
- London gallery
- TV series
- Spun
- Slippery lish
- Drastic food shortage
- de combat
- Snake
- Author Ambler
- Gill recipient
- Sticky stuff
- TV series
- Small child
- Poor
- Cool
- Bend in a ship's timber
- Burn with a ray
- Some cars
- Durable wood
- lily
- TV series
- Chimney need
- Wear gradually
- Pout
- Scandinavian god
- Plexus or energy
- years (elderly)
- Cartel letters
- British machine carbines
- Famous loch

DOWN

- Polite address
- Pakistan language
- Valcinegor
- Hero
- Go without food
- Gel up
- Sudden flow
- A Bancroft
- Pierced
- Laud
- Egad kin
- Portal
- Ogle
- Long time
- Adjust
- Great deeds
- Malicious crime
- "The Secret Life of Walter"
- Throng
- Mere
- Concur
- Echolocation
- Military bases
- Buck males
- Chou
- Vulnerable spot
- Rare
- Directs to a source for help
- Eastern VIP
- From oil
- Car type
- Leaning
- "Cool Hand"
- Gait
- Predicament
- "Last Days of Pompeii"
- heroine
- San — Obispo
- liches
- Ziegfeld of the theater

Peanuts



WOODSTOCK: NOW LOOK WHAT YOU DID! YOU GOT ME KICKED OUT OF THE SWEETHEART BALL!

SNOOPY: I WAS HAVING THE BEST TIME OF MY LIFE! I WAS HAVING FUN!

WOODSTOCK: HOW CAN YOU HAVE FUN IN A PLACE WHERE DOGS AREN'T ALLOWED?

Andy Capp



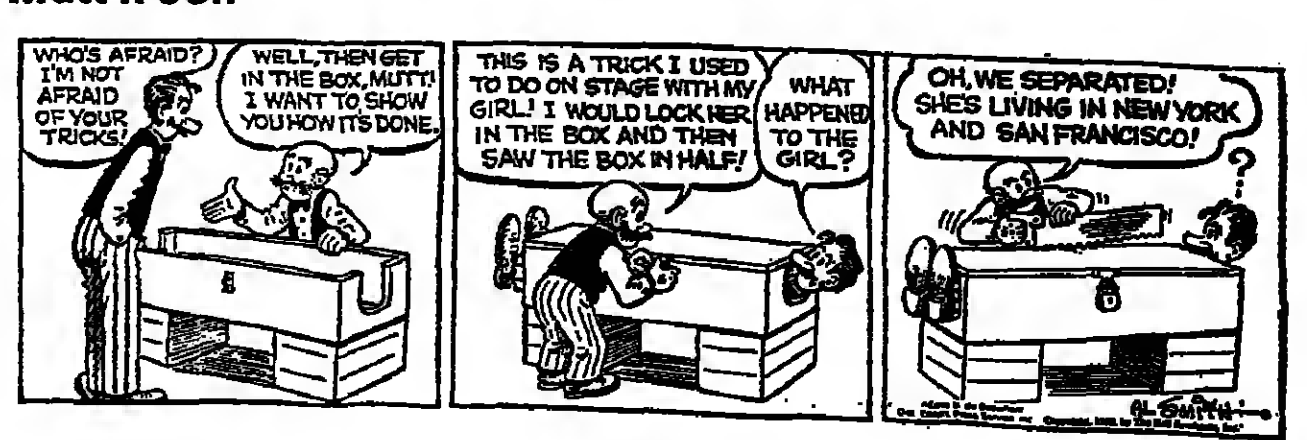
ANDY: I SUPPOSE YOU TOLD YOU, ANDY.

ANDY: THINGS ARE GOING SLACK AT WORK. THEY'RE THINKING OF PUTTING HER AND REASON PART-TIME.

ANDY: YES, I HEARD, CHALICE.

ANDY: YOU'RE NOT KIDDING, RUGGED, B.F. WIFE AND HALF AS MUCH INCOME.

Mutt'n'Jeff



MUTT: WHO'S AFRAID? I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOUR TRICKS!

JEFF: WELL, THEN GET IN THE BOX, MUTT! I WANT TO SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE.

MUTT: THIS IS A TRICK I USED TO DO ON STAGE WITH MY GIRL! I WOULD LOCK HER IN THE BOX AND THEN SAW THE BOX IN HALF!

JEFF: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIRL?

MUTT: OH, WE SEPARATED! SHE'S LIVING IN NEW YORK AND SAN FRANCISCO!

Egyptian businessmen secure 'direct' deals with Iraq

By Mervat Suwadeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A group of Egyptian industrialists and businessmen has concluded a six-day visit to Iraq after laying the foundation for resuming normal trade relations between the two Arab countries for the first time since the 1990 Gulf War, the head of the delegations said Saturday.

Mr. Mamduh Makky, Vice-President of the Egyptian Federation of Industries, said more than ten agreements to export Egyptian food and medical supplies to Iraq in addition to a protocol on industrial cooperation were signed during the visit.

"We will send an urgent shipment of medicine as a present to the Iraqi people," Mr. Makky said. "Then we will start to provide medical

and food supplies in line with the agreement signed last week," he told the Jordan Times. He declined to provide further details on the agreements but Iraqi sources in Cairo told AFP that the accords "were worth some \$40 million."

Mr. Makky stressed that his country was trying to enhance its economic relations with all Arab countries and that it was hoping to conclude trade agreements with Iraq similar to the ones signed with Jordan earlier this month.

"We do believe that the only way for Arab countries to protect themselves against emerging economic blocs is to strengthen economic ties between them," Mr. Makky noted adding that "Egypt is working on achieving this goal by focusing on economic cooperation with

Arab countries."

Mr. Makky, also a parliament member, said despite Egypt's full compliance with United Nations sanctions, the Egyptians "realise that the Iraqi people are not responsible for the sanctions and everything should be done to help them."

The visit by the Egyptian team to Iraq is the first of its kind since 1990 when relations between the two countries soured after Egypt joined the U.S.-led alliance that ousted Iraq from Kuwait.

Iraq, which is striving under stringent economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations since its invasion of Kuwait, mainly depends on Jordanian traders and industries for supplies of material exempt from sanctions.

It was not immediately clear whether the entrance of the Iraqi market will have a negative impact on local industrialists and traders, already complaining of the government's decision to cut down by half Jordan's exports to Iraq.

On Tuesday, many Jordanian industrialists warmly welcomed the signing of the long-awaited oil-for-food deal between Iraq and the United Nations.

"Egyptian products used to enter the Iraqi market through Jordanian merchants. Now that the relations between us are going back to its natural course, Egyptian industrialists and businessmen will be able to deal with Iraqi buyers directly," Mr. Makky maintained.

Trading remains largely steady, prices dip at AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Trading remained largely steady last week at the stock market, with share prices slipping a little as investors awaited government moves to bring down interest rates, brokers said Friday.

They noted that the government had promised to launch moves beginning early June to bring down yield on bank deposits in Jordanian dinars after officials said that the objective of high interest rates had been achieved in terms of boosting foreign exchange rates and stabilising the exchange rate of the local currency.

The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said total trading for the week was 4.3 million dinars against 4.6 million dinars for the previous week.

The official AFM index based on 60 major companies closed at 147.19 points, down 0.55 points or 0.37 per cent from the week's opening of 147.74 points.

Sectoral indices showed that services sector shares dipped by 0.54 per cent, commercial banks and financial institutions 0.47 per cent and industrials by 0.27 per cent. Insurance stocks went up by 0.53 per cent.

The AFM report said 3.6 million shares changed hands during the week under 4,179 contracts. Daily average trading was 1.1 million dinars (\$1.55 million) with four days of trading. (Saturday was an official holiday) compared with 900,000 million (\$1.26 million) in five days of trading in the previous week.

Industrials accounted for 2.63 million dinars (\$3.7 million), or 60.9 per cent of the weekly volume, followed by commercial banks and financial institutions with 1.19 million dinars (\$1.67 million) or 26.9 per cent, services sector firms with 490,000 dinars (\$690,000), or 11.3 per cent, and insurance companies with 39,000 dinars (\$54,900) or 0.9 per cent.

Shares of 95 companies were involved in the week's trading, with 41 of them slipping with gains, 29 slipping and 25 remaining stable.

Pearl Consulting, which maintains its own market indices, said shares of commercial banks and financial institutions had slipped by

0.36 per cent and service sector stocks by 0.19 per cent. Insurance firms gained 0.26 per cent and industrials 0.81 per cent, according to the Pearl indices.

A further sectoral split-up by Pearl showed that commercial banks slipped by 0.22 per cent and specialised banking institutions by 4.05 per cent while investment banks gained 0.16 per cent and Islamic banks 1.74 per cent.

In the services sector, energy firms remained unchanged, tourism and hotels slipped by 0.71 per cent, transport companies dropped by 0.54 per cent, investment and real estate entities gained 0.32 per cent and press and publication companies remained unchanged. Commercial entities and education and other sectors slipped by 1.17 per cent.

Among industrials, mining firms lost 1.94 per cent, chemical and petroleum firms gained 0.13 per cent, supply and consumption 0.22 per cent, construction

1.04 per cent and pharmaceuticals 6.65 per cent. Engineering firms dipped by 1.37 per cent, textiles 0.6 per cent and packing 0.21 per cent.

Brokers said they expected no major changes in the level of trading and prices for the next two or three weeks as investors looked for signs that the Central Bank of Jordan was moving towards bringing down interest rates.

Interest rates have gone up to 9.5 per cent on three- and six-month term deposits in Jordanian dinars as a result of a Central Bank policy to maintain strong edge for the dinar against the American dollar in its bid to check conversions of the dinar into the greenback.

The high-yield bid attracted a large chunk of funds available on the stock market floor, creating a serious liquidity crisis, which in turn led to a dramatic drop in prices over the last four months. The official AFM price index, which the report said closed at 147.19 points this week had peaked at 155 points by the end of last year.

The index dipped to 140 points last month as a result of lack of liquidity in the market, and the government intervened to prop up prices with large-scale buying by state-owned pension funds and investment agencies and promised that the Central Bank would also bring down interest rates beginning in June.

DAILY BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

National Industries Company boosts net profit by 87 per cent

★DESPIITE REGISTERING a gross profit of JD 880,693 that is 5.7 per cent lower than the JD 930,867 recorded in 1994, the National Industries Company (NIC) posted a JD 413,433 net profit that is 87 per cent higher than the JD 221,150 generated in 1994. Board chairman Mohammad Samih Barakat told the general assembly that the difficulties encountered by the company in 1995 were mainly the continued economic recession on the local and regional levels, the emergence of new barriers to export to the markets in the area, especially during the last four months of 1995, and the high international prices for raw materials. He said that the cost of raw materials had reached levels "not seen since many years ago."

Mr. Barakat indicated that the difficulties did not prevent the company from pushing sales higher by 17 per cent to JD 5.22 million (JD 4.47 million in 1994) as production reached a record of 6,373 tonnes of sanitary paper, an increase of 10.7 per cent over the 5,755 tonnes produced in 1994. Adnan Al Huseini, company's general manager, expected sales to rise further this year as the NIC management was able to bind non-traditional markets in Europe to absorb its products. However, he pointed out that the shipping costs to these markets were high \$170 per tonne to Greece and Italy compared to \$30 per tonne to Syria). According to Mr. Huseini, other European markets include Cyprus and Britain in addition to Greece and Italy. "These new markets have a larger absorbing capacity than the markets we lost although we would have liked to retain and continue exporting to them," he said.

The general manager revealed that new equipment worth about JD 2 million had arrived and are currently being installed. He explained that NIC had ordered the equipment from Italy to introduce modern and computerised production lines that would enable the company to raise production efficiency, lower costs and improve the quality of its products to boost its competitiveness in order to increase profitability.

The company, which has a capital of JD 6 million and JD 7.68 million in total assets (JD 5.49 million in 1994), will be distributing JD 360,000 in dividends at a rate of six per cent after having obtained the necessary approval from the general assembly (Al Dastour + Al Aswaq).

1995 was the worst year for Jordan printing and packaging

★LAST YEAR was the worst year for the Jordan Printing and Packaging Company (JPPC) since 1972 when the firm was set-up. JPPC board chairman Kamal Asfour told the general assembly. He said the printing market in Jordan had witnessed a stiff competition and large investments that were spent on establishing industrial printing companies in Jordan. Noting that the needs of the local market were only slightly increased in the printing business, Mr. Asfour said the situation in the market did not improve and that the heightened competition had affected the company. Further problems came from the rise in the prices of raw materials, paper carton as well as the increase in sales tax. For all these reasons, Mr. Asfour said, the company decided not to complete studies for new investments "until brighter indicators emerge from the market."

According to the annual report, sales fell by 26 per cent from JD 1.09 million to JD 0.81 million and receivables shot up from JD 80,300 to JD 358,600. The company managed to reduce production costs by 32 per cent and netted JD 73,700 in operational profit. However, due to the sale of fixed assets valued at JD 205,000, JPPC reported a pre-tax profit of JD 208,800 which was allocated over various reserves and retained earnings as no were distributed. The company has JD 962,000 in current assets, JD 688,000 in fixed assets and a JD 976,400 in shareholders equity (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq).

U.S. tobacco industry still facing fights on all fronts

NEW YORK (R) — Cigarette makers won a major victory with the dismissal of a huge class action by the nation's smokers but they still face possible criminal indictments and increased regulation, as well as other litigation.

Thursday's ruling by a New Orleans federal appeals court to decertify what would have been the nation's largest class-action lawsuit was essentially procedural and did not address the most troublesome issues facing the industry today.

Lawyers involved in other challenges to the industry minimised the ruling in the so-called Castano case, saying it will have no impact on their efforts to hold tobacco

companies liable for nicotine addiction and to regulate cigarette sales.

"Although the (Castano) plaintiffs' lawyers will see it as a devastating setback to them, in terms of the national public interest in holding tobacco companies accountable and subjecting them to reasonable regulation... I don't see this as a serious setback at all," said Harvard University law professor Laurence Tribe, who is assisting in anti-smoking cases.

The issue before the court was not one of liability but whether the Castano case could be tried as a class action, in which a small number of plaintiffs can represent a much larger group of individuals with similar claims and

circumstances.

The purpose of a class action is to eliminate the need for numerous individual trials to determine liability. However, the court found that there would be too many legal and factual differences among the 50 million potential plaintiffs in the Castano case to try it as a single class action.

While the ruling barred a national federal class action case, it did not address the following questions facing the tobacco industry in various forms across the country:

- Is nicotine addictive?
- Did tobacco executives conceal health information?
- Can the industry be held liable for individuals' smoking habits?

Has the industry intentionally marketed its products to minors?

For example, the Justice Department is currently conducting criminal grand jury probes into whether tobacco executives lied to Congress about the addictive nature of nicotine and whether the industry committed securities fraud by withholding this information and other health hazards.

Tobacco companies deny these allegations.

The issue of nicotine addiction is also at the heart of a growing number of individual lawsuits as well as the cases brought by eight states seeking repayment from the tobacco industry for the Medicaid costs of smokers.

Toyota, Matsushita team up on electric car batteries

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's leading auto maker, Toyota Motor Corp. and leading electronics maker Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. have said they would team up to develop rechargeable batteries for electric cars.

The joint venture would combine Matsushita's research and development and production technologies for batteries with Toyota's technologies for car battery applications in developing, making and selling nickel metal hydride batteries.

The companies aimed to actively expand the electric

vehicle market, they said in a statement.

Provisionally named Panasonic E.V. Energy Co. Ltd., the joint venture had a planned start up date of September and would be located at a factory owned by Matsushita subsidiary Matsushita Battery Industrial Co. Ltd.

Start-up capital would be an initial two billion yen (\$19. million), with Matsushita holding 60 per cent and Toyota the remainder.

Toyota has been active in

developing electric vehicles and already makes use of Matsushita's rechargeable batteries.

Toyota Managing Director Masanao Sbiomi told a news conference the new battery would be standardised in size in Japan and the United States in order to facilitate marketing worldwide.

He said the battery would be marketed to other major auto makers, such as General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. of the United States.

The venture had no plans to produce other types of rechargeable battery, such as Sony Corporation's lithium ion battery.

"At the moment, our nickel hydride-type is the most advanced one," Matsushita Battery Industries President Shiro Donishi said.

He is to be president of the new venture.

The venture is forecast to be profit-making by 2000, with annual sales seen at 10,000 units in Japan, the United States and Europe in that year.

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close	
Sterling Pound*	1.5890	1.5078**	
Deutsche Mark	1.5634	1.5619	
Swiss Franc	1.2445	1.2481**	
French Franc	5.2555	5.2360**	
Japanese Yen	107.18	106.77	
European Currency Unit	1.5223	1.5216**	
* 100 per 1000			
** Source: Reuters 9:50 AM GMT			
Eurocurrency Interest Rates			
Currency	1 MONTH	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.14	5.25	5.31
Sterling Pound	5.81	5.41	5.81
Deutsche Mark	5.12	5.06	5.12
Swiss Franc	5.12	5.00	5.06
French Franc	5.56	5.56	5.68
Japanese Yen	0.85	0.58	0.44
European Currency Unit	4.37	4.35	4.25
Interest rate for deposits (USD) 100,000 or equivalent			
Precious Metals			
Metal	USD/oz	JD/Gm	Metal
Gold	391.20	5.60	Silver
			5.33
			0.100
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Date: 23/5/1996			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.2080	0.2100	
Sterling Pound	1.6676	1.6720	
Deutsche Mark	0.4584	0.4607	
Swiss Franc	0.5580	0.5608	
French Franc	0.1356	0.1381	
Japanese Yen*	0.8671	0.8654	
Dutch Guilder	0.4691	0.4719	
Swedish Krona	*****	*****	
Italian Lira*	0.0454	0.0456	
Belgian Franc	*****	*****	
Other Currencies			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Israeli Sheqel	1.8682	1.8780	
Lebanese Lira*	0.244385	0.245075	
Saudi Riyal	0.1770	0.1805	
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.2310	1.2370	
Qatari Riyal	0.1938	0.1945	
Egyptian Pound	0.2180	0.2200	
Omani Ryal	1.8330	1.8410	
UAE Dirham	0.1932	0.1935	
Greek Drachma*	0.2765	0.2865	
Cypriot Pound	1.4445	1.5050	
* per 100			



Seattle Supersonics' Hersey Hawkins looks for a way out from under Utah Jazz's Jeff Hornacek and Felton Spencer (50) during their NBA playoff game, May 24. The Jazz remained perfect at home and alive in the post-season with a 96-76 victory over the Supersonics in game three of their Western Conference finals (Reuters photo)

Utah Jazz win game 3

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — Jeff Hornacek and Karl Malone scored 28 points apiece and Byron Russell added a career-high 24 off the bench as the Utah Jazz pulled away to a 96-76 win over the Seattle Supersonics Friday.

"Utah cut its deficit in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals to 2-1 and remained perfect at home in the post-season. Game 4 is Sunday at Utah, where the Jazz are 7-0 in the playoffs and have won their playoff games by an average margin of nearly 22 points."

"I think a lot of people thought the series was over after we lost two down there," said Hornacek. "We've still got some work to do on Sunday but we feel pretty confident playing here."

"Byron Russell did a great job," said Malone, who had 18 rebounds. "We talk about our bench giving us a lift and I think he really came out and gave us that lift we needed. And that's what we're going to need in game 4 because these guys are going to come out ready to play us again. We need different heroes different nights."

Utah closed the game with a 16-2 run, holding Seattle to just one basket over the final 6:09.

Gary Payton scored 25 points and Detlef Schrempf added 17 for Seattle, which

lost for the first time in five road playoff games and had an eight-game winning streak snapped. All-star forward Shawn Kemp again was plagued by foul trouble and scored just 10 points.

"We stayed on the perimeter too much, we should've penetrated a little more, tried to get it in and fouled," said Payton. "The game was wild, out of control and we didn't respond well. We just missed shots, they didn't do anything different."

Utah took control of the game with a 22-7 run bridging the third and fourth quarters capped by three Malone free throws and a 16-footer to push the lead to 70-61.

NBA PLAYOFFS

The Jazz led 72-65 after three quarters and scored the first six points of the final period.

Seattle pulled within 80-74 with 6:09 remaining, but Malone had a dunk off a pick-and-roll to trigger the game-ending run.

Seattle, which scored 27 points in the first quarter, scored just 29 in the second half — 11 in the fourth quarter.

"We've been playing great defence at home," said Malone. "It's kind of amazing. We wish we could bottle this up and carry it on the road with us. At home it seems we just get after peo-

ple more, individually, and then we look for the help."

Russell's 24 points bettered the amount scored by Utah's entire bench in the first two games of the series (22). Russell made 8-of-14 shots from the field and pulled down 10 rebounds.

"I just came out relaxed," Russell said. "I didn't come out like the first two games played in Seattle. Everything was happening for me."

He added: "Everybody talks about Seattle's defence, but we play pretty good defence ourselves. Everybody just buckled down and did the job."

Kemp had just four shots and committed eight turn-

overs.

"We let this team come in here and put their bodies on us and outbounced us and outthrust us and that determined the game," said Kemp. "Turnovers killed us, I had eight or nine myself and I can't do that. We got non-aggressive on offence and elected to shoot the ball from the outside."

The Jazz shot 44.2 per cent (34-of-77) from the field and outbounced Seattle 45-37.

The Sonics shot 39.7 per cent (27-of-68) and committed 27 turnovers, leading to 27 Utah points. Seattle totaled 26 turnovers in the first two games.

tricks was clubs, a club was led to the king and, when East discarded a diamond on a club back to the ace, declarer had to go back to the drawing board.

Now the diamond king had to be onside for the contract to have any chance. Indeed, if West held the king of diamonds guarded only one, that suit would produce two extra tricks. When a low diamond to the queen won, but the king did not appear under the ace, declarer needed four tricks from the spade suit to get home.

Should declarer play to drop the jack or finesse the ten of spades on the third round? The opening lead marked West for four hearts, and that defender was known to hold four clubs. Since the king of diamonds did not drop, West also had at least three diamonds. Thus, 11 of West's cards were revealed to the mind's eye, so there was no room for more than two spades. Declarer brusquely cashed the ace and king of spades and, when West followed low to both rounds, confidently finessed the ten of spades next for the fulfilling trick.

Lewis puts 200-metre speed to test today

EUGENE, Oregon (R) — Eight-times Olympic champion Carl Lewis, suddenly a sprint threat again, hopes to boost his Atlanta 200-metre medal chances when he competes in the Prefontaine Classic on Sunday.

The Grand Prix meeting, Lewis's last major competition before next month's U.S. Olympic trials in Atlanta, also features world 100-metre record-holder Leroy Burrell, world pole vault record holder Sergei Bubka of Ukraine and his South African protégé, Okkert Brits, and Olympic women's 100-metre favourite Gwen Torrence.

The 34-year-old Lewis, who performed poorly indoors, became the buzz of last weekend's Atlanta

Grand Prix event after almost catching fellow American Dennis Mitchell in the men's 100 metres.

His slightly wind-aided performance of 9.94 seconds was clearly Lewis's best showing since he clocked 9.86 seconds for a then-world record in 1991.

"I don't think it (the time) surprised him," said Mike Takaba, a sprint coach at the University of Houston where Lewis trains. "If anything surprised him, it was the fact that he was able to accelerate all the way through. That part of his race has been lacking since 1991."

"A lot of it is that he's more motivated than he has been in some time," Takaba added. "He knows this is probably his last

Olympics, and he wants to go out with a bang. He wants people to know that he's still alive."

"Because of sickness and injuries, his level of fitness was not very high at the end of last year. He had lost a lot of his base, and his reserve was tapped out. Now he's training harder than he has in several years."

Sunday's race should be more of a familiarisation run than a major test, Takaba said.

"Because Carl doesn't run the 200 as much as some of the other sprinters, there are certain things he needs to become familiar with again, like running the curve," Takaba said.

"But he's running well, and if the weather's decent,

Eugene certainly will be an easier place for him to run a good time than Mount Sac because the turns are not as tight."

Lewis clocked 20.19 seconds for 200 metres in the Mount San Antonio relays in California last month, sixth fastest of the season.

Burrell, one of Lewis's training partners, didn't compete in the Atlanta meeting because of a foot blister, one of a number of problems that have bothered him.

"We'll find out Sunday how good a shape he's in," Takaba said. "I think he's in very good shape."

Burrell didn't look it earlier this month in Houston when he ran 10.39 seconds for 100 metres after react-

ing poorly to the starter's gun and jogging for much of the last 25 metres.

Bubka delivered the highest outdoor vault ever in the United States last weekend, clearing 6.02 metres (19 feet, 9 inches) at Atlanta while Brits, who has been 6.01 metres (19 feet, 8½ inches) this year finished eighth at 5.60 metres (18 feet, 4½ inches).

Torrence, who could win three gold medals in the Atlanta Olympics, also was impressive, running the year's fastest women's 100 metres, 10.85 seconds.

Men's double world champion Michael Johnson will miss Sunday's meeting because of a sore right hamstring. He was scheduled to run 400 metres.

Gascoigne out of action for final warm-up

HONG KONG (R) — A poisoned groin could keep Paul Gascoigne out of England's final warm-up game in Hong Kong on Sunday, just three days before coach Terry Venables has to finalise his 22-man squad for Euro 96.

Gascoigne, who scored in England's 3-0 win over China on Thursday, will not be in the starting line-up against local side Golden after a blister on his foot turned septic.

Venables, who has made eight changes from the side which beat China in Beijing, said: "He got a big blister from the boots he wore in that game which wasn't too bad."

"But during the trip on the plane to Hong Kong it became poisonous and has given him a lump in his groin. He was struggling yesterday but it's a little better today and if he feels fine in the morning I hope he'll be on the substitutes' bench. It's not a long-term problem."



Blackburn's Tim Flowers heads the ball in training as part of the English national side in Hong Kong May 25. England will play against Hong Kong's Golden Football Club on May 26, as they continue their preparations for the European Championships (Reuters photo)



England's Paul Gascoigne pours a bottle of water over his head as a cool break from Hong Kong's heat and humidity during a training session May 25 (Reuters photo)

Zubero wins at Alamo Challenge

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida (R) — Martin Zubero, Spain's national hero since the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, won the 200-metre backstroke at the Alamo Challenge Friday after coming out of retirement to prepare for the Atlanta Games.

Zubero, the 1992 gold medalist and former world record holder in the 200-metre backstroke, qualified in February for his second Olympics, this summer.

Zubero, 27, became a national hero after winning Spain's first gold medals in swimming at both the 1991 world aquatics championships in Rome and the 1992 Olympics.

He was paid \$2 million by his country for winning the Olympic gold medal.

Zubero said he is using the four-day Alamo Challenge to work his way back into competitive form. He won the 200-metre backstroke in a relatively slow 2:04.36 and failed to reach the final of the 200-metre freestyle, one of his off events. He finished 12th in the consolation final in 1:57.93.

"This second time around I'm doing it more for me," said Zubero, who is training in nearby Gainesville, Florida. "I still love to compete and I want to see if I can come close to my best times again. It would be a nice way to go out."

His brother David, who is one of his coaches, is a 1980 Olympic bronze medalist in the 100 butterfly and Zubero helped his brother invest the money he earned from the Spanish swimming federation and government.

"He doesn't feel the pressure like he did last time," David Zubero said. "I think he's enjoying it more because being 27 he knows his career is coming to an end."

American schoolgirl Jessica Fusch, 15, won her third and fourth events of the meeting in the 200-metre freestyle and 400-metre individual medley, after earning firsts in the 800 metres freestyle and 800 freestyle relay on Thursday.

Foschi outspun Mexico's Daniela Villegas to win the 200 metres freestyle in 2:04.99. Foschi won the 400 medley in 4:59.16.

Foschi tested positive last August for steroids at the National Championships in Pasadena, California, but was exonerated by a U.S. arbitration committee last month.

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HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein presents trophies to winners at Saturday's horse-race

Arabians race to celebrate Independence

By Munem Fakhorri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein was all smiles yesterday as she presented awards to winners in a horse-race meeting held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Kingdom's independence day.

Seventeen pure Arabians participated in the three races which took place on the grounds of Al Hussein Youth City. The home-bred "Lati", the winner of the last and biggest race of the day was disqualified by the stewards following a violation committed by its jockey Ahmad Al Dahham. But the incident only added to the excitement of the several hundred race goers "who appreciated not only the speed of the horses but also their beauty, traits that have been registered by the London-based World Arabian Horses Organisation," as a sportsman put it. The 1,600 metre (1 1/8 mile) race for older horses went instead to the Iraqi bred "Nowwar", which had come in second at the finish line. "Nowwar" is owned by Waleed Assaf. The 1,200 metre (nearly seven furlongs) opening race (photo below) went to the four-year-old "Sarab" which won brilliantly from the three-year-old "Amer." Sarah is owned by Mr. Azmi Mihyar.

The 1,400 metre (nearly one mile) second race for horses aged five and six years was won by the Holland-bred "Bomenda", which is owned by Mr. Raed Manasreh.



Horses race to the finish line in Saturday's opening race

Spanish Open defies top seeds

MADRID (R) — Spain's second seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario lost her semifinal match to Bulgarian Magdalena Maleeva in the Women's Spanish Open on Friday and joined injured top seed Monica Seles on the sidelines for the finals.

Fourth seed Maleeva was thrilled to have toppled defending champion Sanchez Vicario 6-4 7-5 in the Spaniard's homeland and on her favoured clay surface.

"It's very lovely to defeat Arantxa on clay," Maleeva said.

"It has been one of my best matches because Arantxa played very well and before starting I didn't think I could beat her."

Sanchez Vicario has won the Spanish women's event five times in its 10-year history, including the last

three in a row but had trouble settling into a rhythm against the erratic 21-year-old Bulgarian.

"With her it's always heads or tails. Either she hits it hard and even or she sends them out," Sanchez Vicario said.

The Spaniard hopes to redeem herself at the Roland Garros Tournament in France. "I've had good preparation and I'm very hopeful," she said.

Seles, the 1992 winner, had to pull out after reaching the semifinals because a nagging shoulder injury flared up. The American joint world No. 1 is now in some doubt for the French Open next week.

Maleeva will face Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic in the Saturday's final.

2nd Division Basketball Hussein top standings as Abbasi pull out of tourney

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jeel face Al Rayah and Gazzet Hashem take on Homeotmen in two crucial match ups that will have a significant effect on the overall standings of the second division basketball championship.

However, with only a week left for the conclusion of the tournament and while teams battle for the top two places, the withdrawal of two teams has left only six clubs in contention.

Karak had pulled out before the start of the tournament, and on Friday Al Abbasi did not show up for their scheduled match and announced they were pulling out as well citing sub-standard refereeing. Contacted by the Jordan Times, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) spokesman said the federation had not received any formal letter from Al Abbasi and until now considered them only having withdrawn from their latest match Friday. If they continue to miss their matches or pull out of the championship altogether then they will be relegated to the third division and competition rules stipulate that all their results will be annulled thus affecting the overall standings of the other six remaining teams.

Al Hussein Irbid remain the only unbeaten team of the tournament and are the strongest contenders for returning to the first division from which they were relegated for the first time last season.

In their latest match they scored a crucial 69-58 win over Al Jeel, last year's second division runner up and a top contender for promotion.

Al Hussein had scored their other two victories in earlier matches over Homeotmen and Gazzet Hashem.

Their next match is against Al Ashrafiah Wednesday. Homeotmen, another former first division team relegated in 1994, play Gazzet Hashem Sunday hoping to continue their wins and secure second place and a chance for promotion.

While the top team automatically qualifies, the second ranked team will be in a playoff for promotion when they take on the last-placed team in the first division late on.

Homeotmen had beaten last year's third division champs and one of the strongest contenders for promotion, Al Rayah 68-56 in their last match Friday.

Al Rayah are among the top three and had scored a big upset over another favourite, Al Abbasi, a former first division team who were relegated last year after withdrawing from the championship.

	P	W	L	SP	SA	Pts
Hussein	1	3	2	232	135	6
Rayah	2	3	2	203	185	5
Homeotmen	3	1	4	157	207	4
Gazzet Hashem	4	1	4	113	147	4
Jeel	5	1	4	112	98	3
Ashrafiah	6	1	4	85	107	3
Abbasi	7	0	5	63	88	2
Karak	8	0	5			2

* Relegated to third division

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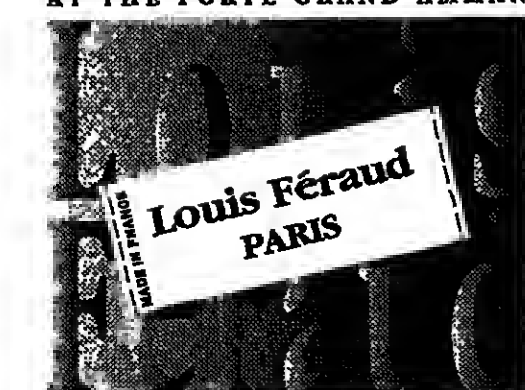
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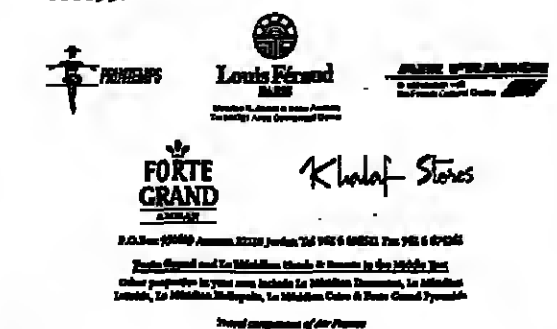
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Vialli announces transfer to Chelsea

TURIN (AP) — Former Italian national team striker Gianluca Vialli announced Friday that he will transfer from Juventus to Chelsea to experience the English Premier League following 12 years in the Italian first division.

"It will be a sort of rebirth for me. I expect to get new motivations, new elation from this experience," Vialli told a press conference, as he made public his "divorce" from Juventus.

The 31-year-old, shaved-scalp forward leaves La Juve after four seasons, and only two days after helping the Turin club to the European Champions Cup title over Ajax of Amsterdam at Rome's Olympic stadium.

The Italian international, addressing a crowd of reporters at the local press club, said he signed a three-year contract with the English team.

He did not disclose terms of his contract but reliable sources reported Vialli would get about 2.8 million lire (\$1.5 million) a year.

Vialli will serve under Ruud Gullit beginning on June 30, when his contract with Juventus expires. However, he will be presented by his new club to the English media and fans in London on June 17.

Gullit, who was named player-coach of Chelsea two weeks ago as replacement for Glenn Hoddle, played against Vialli in the Italian league when the Dutchman led AC Milan.

"Ruud is a good friend of mine. He speaks Italian. I'll feel at home with him," said Vialli, who joked about his lack of English language skills.

"My English is poor and I'll have to take courses in London. But I know the value of the pound," he said.



Italy's Juventus captain Gianluca Vialli arrives for a news conference in Turin May 24 in which he announced he will sign a contract with Chelsea football club. (Reuters photo)

Vialli explained he decided to sign with Chelsea on Thursday, after Juventus failed to offer a contract extension.

It was known that Vialli was seeking another 2-3 years with the Turin club, owned by a Agnelli automaking family of FIAT, which only wanted to sign a single-year deal.

"I gave and received a lot during four years with La Juve," Vialli said. "It was a terrific experience. It was a divorce by mutual consent. I'm leaving without grudge. I hope to return to Italy one day, possibly as a manager, as soccer is all my life."

Vialli's agent, Claudio Pasqualin, disclosed that at least 15 clubs had expressed interest in Vialli — several from abroad.

Chelsea made its first offer on May 3, Pasqualin said.

Vialli refused to mention the other clubs, but indicated that Glasgow Rangers was

one of them. "My desire to go to London, was greater than going to Scotland," said Vialli, who also noted his fiancée, Giovanna Moro, will stay with him in London.

Vialli said he was not deterred by Chelsea's failure to qualify for the European cups next season.

"I have won all of them in my career. I can take a season off from the international scene and help Chelsea win a European berth next year," said Vialli, who added he was looking forward to a quicker and physical soccer in the English League.

"For sure there is more fair play in England and less drama than in Italy. I feel more English than Italian as a player."

Juergen Klinsmann, who played in Italy with Inter and for Chelsea's London rivals Tottenham Hotspur last year, predicted Vialli would make a huge impact in England.

"Gianluca will fit perfectly into the game in England," the Bayern Munich striker and German captain said. "He's not the sort of player who just concentrates when he gets the ball in a match."

"He is somebody who moves and runs for the entire 90 minutes, working like crazy and I know he won't have a problem here in England because that's the type of player the fans like to see."

One of the best all-time Italian strikers, Vialli has 123 goals in 325 Serie A games. But he said he was not going to England to lead the Premier League in scoring.

"The point is the team play and the team victory, no matter who scores the goals," he said.

After beginning his career in the junior teams of his native town Cremona, Vialli played eight seasons with Sampdoria of Genoa and four with Juventus.

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Iraq, U.N. said to have reached accord on PoWs

KUWAIT (AP) — Iraq and the United Nations have reached an agreement that would clear the way for Baghdad to free hundreds of prisoners from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis it has repeatedly denied holding, the Al-Siyassah daily reported Saturday.

The pro-government newspaper quoted "informed Western diplomatic sources" in Amman as saying the prisoners seized in Kuwait have been asked to fill out Red Cross forms stating that they have been living of their own free will in Iraq but now would like to go home.

This would give Baghdad a face-saving device to release the prisoners without having to admit that it had detained them, Al-Siyassah said.

Iraq has persistently denied holding any prisoners taken from Kuwait. But authorities here insist Iraq holds 609 prisoners who were detained after Iraq invaded the emirate in August 1990.

The government's committee for prisoners of war affairs could not be reached for comment on the report. But Robin Waver of the international committee of the Red Cross said in Geneva: "We have absolutely no information about any such agreement."

A deal on releasing the Kuwaiti and other prisoners would move Baghdad one step closer to satisfying U.N. Security Council demands for lifting crippling trade sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990 after it invaded Kuwait.

Last week, Iraq agreed to Security Council terms that will allow Baghdad to sell oil worth \$1 billion every 90 days for an initial six-month period to buy urgently needed food and medicine, which it is permitted to import under the embargo.

Iraqis view that accord as the first crack in the sanctions that have devastated their economy.

Baghdad has to account for the missing before U.N. sanctions can be lifted.

Al-Siyassah quoted its sources as saying that Iraqi authorities recently moved the prisoners from jails in four Iraqi provinces to Baghdad, where they would be examined by doctors and psychiatrists before returning home.

On May 15, a Kuwaiti woman, whose name was on the list of the missing, returned home after more than five years in Iraq.

Baghdad said Nadia Mohammad Al-Inizi had been "living freely" in Iraq and decided to rejoin her family in Kuwait. She has not been accessible to the media since her return.

The list of prisoners includes 544 Kuwaitis, as well as citizens of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Syria, India, Lebanon, Bahrain, Oman and the Philippines.

None of their families have heard from them since they disappeared during the seven-month Iraqi occupation and the 1991 Gulf war that liberated the emirate.



FEMALE BULLFIGHTER: Spanish bullfighter Cristina Sanchez toys with a bull during a bullfight in the French city of Nîmes on Saturday. Sanchez, who was making her debut at the so-called Nîmes Feria, is the first female bullfighter in Europe (Reuters photo)

Khartoum is responsible for fugitives — Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudan is responsible for the extradition of three militants demanded by the United Nations even if they are no longer on its territory, Egypt's representative to the U.N. said on Saturday.

"Khartoum is responsible for the surrender the three accused no matter what their location, whether in Sudan or Afghanistan as they claim or any other country," Nabil Al-Arabi told the government daily Al-Ahram.

Mr. Arabi was referring to press reports that one of the three fugitives, Mustapha Hamza, was in Afghanistan.

The U.N. has slapped diplomatic sanctions on Sudan for failing to hand over to Ethiopia the fugitives, accused of participating in an attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995.

The sanctions, imposed on May 10, may be strengthened after 60 days if Khartoum still does not comply.

Mr. Arabi confirmed that Egypt had asked for a long grace period for Sudan so that debate over toughened sanctions would not come before the Security Council during June, when Egypt holds the council presidency.

"We did not want to give Sudan or anyone else the opportunity to protest that Egypt exploited its position as president to push the council to take a certain position," Mr. Arabi said.

"We hope Sudan will comply with the U.N. resolution to avoid the imposition of further sanctions, and we hope their response will be fast enough," he said.

TV serials return

Sudanese state television has resumed broadcasting Egyptian television serials and films, absent for five

(Continued on page 3)

Rabbani-Hekmatyar interim government soon — spokesman

KABUL (Agencies) — A new interim government will take office soon in war-torn Afghanistan under the peace agreement between President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his former arch-rival Gulbuddin Hekmatyar signed on Friday, a presidential spokesman said on Saturday.

Taliban, a militia besieging Kabul since October, has rejected the agreement as a deception and vowed to continue its campaign to topple Mr. Rabbani.

There has been no response yet from three other major factions allied with Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami party in an opposition supreme coordination council.

Presidential spokesman Aziz Morad told reporters that Hezb-e-Islami would take part in the interim government under the six-point agreement and efforts would continue to bring in more opposition factions.

"I will not tell you about the posts," he said. "But

hopefully in the near future the interim government will begin and many posts will change."

The pact, signed at Mahipar Dam, 20 kilometres east of Kabul, committed Mr. Rabbani and Mr. Hekmatyar to work for peace, set up an interim government acceptable to all factions and hold elections.

It called for national unity, an Islamic system of government and an Islamic army.

Mr. Morad said joint political commissions of the government and Hezb-e-Islami would decide which appointments would be changed.

"This is a basic peace agreement in our country and we won't stop at this point. We will continue negotiations with all the factions. We will continue these initiatives until peace comes at the end of the war."

He appealed to Taliban to come to the negotiating table and said there was no reason for them to continue the war.

He did not rule out positions for Taliban within the interim government.

Government troops joined by Hezb-e-Islami soldiers, meanwhile stepped up their attack on rebel Taliban positions southeast of the Afghan capital.

Backed by helicopter gunships and air strikes, the allied government forces broke through Taliban lines and caused heavy damages and casualties, said Defence Ministry spokesman Amrullah, who like many Afghans uses only one name.

It was the fifth day of heavy fighting near the village of Band-e-Ghazi about 45 kilometres southeast of Kabul.

"We have pushed the Taliban back from their bunkers," Mr. Amrullah said.

The Defence Ministry and commanders near the battlefield claimed as many as 400 Taliban troops had been

(Continued on page 3)

NATO soldiers get a reminder of duty to arrest war criminals

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops serving in Bosnia have received an official notice reminding them of their duties to detain war crimes suspects if they come into contact with them, an informed source told AFP Saturday.

The notice was passed to soldiers Friday, after NATO chief Javier Solana said in Madrid that "war criminals should be in prison," the source said.

The notice, handed out following Mr. Solana's statement, reminded soldiers that the war crimes suspects should be "immobilised" if the soldiers come into contact with them, said the source, who has seen a copy of the notice.

The NATO force has regularly said publicly its troops have orders to detain war

criminals if they come across them in "the normal course of their duties," and the wording to the notice is not considered as significant as its timing.

NATO has come under increasing pressure to do something about the suspected war criminals and was embarrassed this week when the indicted chief of the Serb army, General Ratko Mladic, was able to travel freely Monday from Bosnia-Serb-held territory to Belgrade and back for a funeral.

The notice also reminds soldiers of the necessity to check helicopter flights around the country.

A spokesman for the 60,000-strong NATO-led force in Bosnia, known as IFOR, Lieutenant-Colonel Max Marinier, said Saturday that a Bosnian Serb military helicopter had been allowed

to fly from the main Bosnian Serb town, Banja Luka on Monday to Belgrade and that the flight had not been "physically" checked by IFOR.

The helicopter was listed as carrying a Serb general, he said, but the identity of the person aboard had not been checked, he admitted, while saying "logic would conclude" that Gen. Mladic had not been aboard since he would have had to have come to a busy, public airport to be so.

The question of NATO's commitment to arresting any of the 56 indicted war crimes suspects remaining, after one suspect, Serb General Djordje Djukic, died last week of cancer and was buried in the funeral attended by Gen. Mladic, has blown up this week as political develop-

(Continued on page 3)

Mubarak, Qadhafi hold talks in Cairo

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met Saturday with Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi for talks on a suspected Libyan chemical weapons plant and Tripoli's continuing isolation over the Lockerbie bombing.

The two leaders held a half-hour session and were to meet again later, Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Al-Sherif told reporters after the meeting.

The brief afternoon meeting "touched on foreign matters such as new developments in the Arab region as well as bilateral relations especially in economics and investments," Mr. Sherif said.

Colonel Qadhafi, who crossed the border into Egypt on Friday, spent the night in a caravan camper in the desert between the Mediterranean coastal city of Alexandria and Cairo for "security reasons," Libyan sources said.

The Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram said "American claims that Libya is building a chemical weapons plant" and the Lockerbie crisis would figure high in the talks.

Washington has threatened military action against the plant at Tarhuna, 65 kilometres southeast of Tripoli, which it says will be the world's biggest chemical weapons factory, if diplomacy fails to stop its construction.

Libya has been under an air embargo since 1992 for refusing to hand over the two Libyans accused of being the authors of the 1988 bombing of an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, leaving 270 dead.

"Mubarak will support Libya in its position because he is certain there are no chemical weapons plants in Libya," Col. Qadhafi told a public rally in the Egyptian resort of Marsa Matruh on Friday.

"Libya is threatened by American attacks aimed at destroying its development," he said, repeating Libyan claims that the factory is to produce irrigation pipes.

He said Washington had used photos of the plant "taken by Egyptian journalists and claimed they were satellite photos" of a chemical facility.

In April, Mr. Mubarak pledged to "do our best with the Libyans to get rid of this factory and stop this kind of chemicals," while adding that the chemical weapons claims had not been proven.

Col. Qadhafi had to drive to Egypt with a 40-vehicle convoy because Libya is under the air embargo that is part of the United Nations sanctions.

Libyan Foreign Minister Omar Al-Montassar said Col. Qadhafi would spend three or four days in Cairo.

Mr. Sherif said talks between the two leaders would also cover economic cooperation. Diplomatic sources in Cairo said they would also examine the results of a joint trade committee which aims at increasing economic cooperation and facilitating the exchange of goods and labourers between Cairo and Tripoli.

The sources did not say whether Col. Qadhafi's decision to expel thousands of Palestinians from Libya would be on the agenda.

(Continued on page 3)

COLUMN 8

Brazil's star criminal shoots for big screen

BRASILIA (R) — Brazil's most camera-friendly criminal, famous for on-the-run radio interviews and news conferences amid prison rioting, has made it to the big screen, a director said. Lawyers representing Leonardo Pareja, a convicted armed robber and kidnapper, signed a deal which will pave the way for a full-length feature film with an option for a television series later, director Reginaldo Faria told Reuters. "I see it as something of a thriller," said Faria. Pareja, 22, shot to fame last year when he went on a 40-day spree of armed robberies and high-speed escapes in Brazil's backlands, taunting police in radio interviews before giving himself up.

Paper says Madonna to have girl

NEW YORK (R) — Pop star Madonna's first baby will be a girl, the New York Daily News said. A gossip column in the newspaper said Madonna and boyfriend Carlos Leon would make the announcement when they return soon from a trip to London. It quoted sources as saying Madonna would name her daughter Lola. Publicists for Madonna, 37, announced last month that she was expecting her first baby.

Mississippi said unsafe, polluted

WASHINGTON (R) — The legendary Mississippi River, immortalised by Mark Twain, has become so tainted by sewage that long stretches should be barred to swimmers and some of its fish declared inedible, a conservation group said Friday. "Large portions of the big river ... are unsafe for whole-body contact recreation," the group, American Rivers, said in a report based on recent data from two government agencies. It said most species of fish in the river should only be eaten occasionally, some only once they reached a certain size and a few "should not be eaten at all," the description stood in stark contrast to the waterway of Twain's era a century ago.

Workers find dead stowaway in sugar cargo

NEW YORK (R) — A body found in a ship's cargo hold of raw sugar was apparently that of a stowaway, authorities said. On Thursday night, a fisherman spotted a dead man in the water near John F. Kennedy International Airport. Airport police said the man probably fell out of the wheel well — the recessed area of a plane's belly where the wheels stay, while aloft.

Youth jailed for pelting people with paintballs

LOS ANGELES (R) — One of four youths who videotaped themselves on a paintball rampage shooting people from their car pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two years in prison. Ruffy Flores entered a negotiated plea to charges of assault with a deadly weapon and felony vandalism. The other three youths are also expected to make plea bargains. Superior Court Judge Sandy Krieger gave them one week to reach plea bargains or trial will begin next month. The four youths were arrested last November after the three-october rampage in the suburban San Fernando Valley area in which several people were shot with paint balls. The youths videotaped their attack.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bahrain crown prince visits disputed islands

MANAMA (AP) — The crown prince of Bahrain has made a rare visit to Hawar, a Gulf island chain to which Qatar also claims ownership. The previously unannounced visit by Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, a veteran commander of the 10,000-man defence force, received front-page coverage in Bahrain's government-guided newspapers Saturday. The reports said Sheikh Hamad and other high-ranking officials attended a reception on one of the Hawar islands Friday evening. Qatar and Bahrain have been locked in a dispute over the island chain and the Zubara region in northwest Qatar for years. The territorial dispute flared in 1986, when Qatari helicopters seized 29 workers of a Dutch firm sent by Bahrain to the contested Fasht-Al-Dibal reef to build a coast guard station. Relations between the two countries have since been strained.

Police shoot dead militant in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — A militant wanted for murdering six policemen was killed in a shootout with police raiding his mountain hideout in south Egypt on Saturday, police said. Police said they stormed the hideout of Mahmoud Ibrahim Ahmad, 23, in the desert mountains outside Sawami Al-Sharif village, 500 kilometres south of Cairo, in the province of Sohag. Ahmad was killed in the gun battle after which police arrested his collaborator Abdul Ghaffar Ibrahim. In their hideout, police found a machine gun which had been stolen from a policeman murdered last year in Qena, 100 kilometres to the south, as well as a pistol. Ahmad and Ibrahim had been plotting "terrorist attacks on strategic installations and important personalities" in the Sohag area, police said. Ahmad, a member of Egypt's main militant group Gamaa Islamiyah, had been wanted for killing six policemen in Sohag, Qena and neighbouring Assiut provinces in 1995 and 1996.

Kuwaiti royal determined to become MP

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A member of the Kuwaiti ruling family said in remarks published Saturday that he would go ahead and stand in forthcoming general elections despite criticisms of his unprecedented move. "Only the law and death will stop me from standing," Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd told the daily Al-Siyassah, announcing his determination to become the first member of the ruling family to contest a seat in the national assembly, or parliament. On Friday, Al-Siyassah quoted a government source saying members of the ruling Al-Sabah family are opposed to Sheikh Ahmad's decision and that he would withdraw when he returned from an official visit abroad. Sheikh Ahmad, who is the president of Kuwait's Olympic Committee and Kuwaiti Football Association, is due to return from Turkey on Sunday. He announced his decision to stand in the constituency of Sulayhiyah, a suburb south west of Kuwait City, in early April. "This is the first time" a member of the royal family will stand for parliament, an associate of Sheikh Ahmad told AFP.

Lebanon tells U.S. drugs farming ended

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon, responding to U.S. criticism of its anti-drugs efforts, said in a report published on Saturday it had wiped out illegal drugs cultivation since 1992 and arrested major drug dealers. Thousands of hectares of illegal hashish and poppy plantations in the eastern Bekaa Valley had been destroyed since 1992 with the help of Syrian troops stationed in the country, the Interior Ministry report said. "Thanks to the participation of Syrian (army) units the cultivation of drugs has been eradicated," the report published in Beirut newspapers said. The report, approved by the cabinet of Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri on Wednesday, will be delivered to the U.S. State Department in response to its criticisms of Lebanon in its annual report on worldwide drugs cultivation and trafficking, the newspapers said.

Emergency state in Libya of meningitis

CAIRO (AP) — Libyan health officials have declared a state of emergency in the southern city of Sabha for fear of a meningitis epidemic, Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported Saturday. In a dispatch from the Libyan capital of Tripoli, MENA said the health ministry was conducting an intense vaccination campaign in Sabha, which lies about 650 kilometres south of Tripoli. The disease, which affects brain and spinal cord tissues, was believed to be carried to the city by illegal immigrants, MENA said.

Camera catches Peres haranguing Arafat

PARIS (R) — Every journalist's dream of being a fly on the wall at an international negotiation came true for French film-maker Serge Moati when he caught Israel's Shimon Peres haranguing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in private.

Mr. Moati's documentary film, "Shimon Peres, a fight for peace," will be screened on France 3 public television on June 3, after next Wednesday's Israeli election in which Premier Peres faces a challenge from right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

A preview this week revealed a gripping monologue in which Mr. Peres told a glum-looking Arafat that Israel was working hard in the U.S. Congress to win funds for the Palestinians and warned the Palestine Liberation

Organisation (PLO) chief not to compromise the effort by writing letters of protest to the Israeli leadership.

The incident was filmed in 1994 when Mr. Peres was still foreign minister and after Mr. Arafat, now Palestinian president, had returned to the Gaza Strip following a partial Israeli pullout.

With a hand-held video camera, Mr. Moati was allowed to shoot the start of a meeting between the two men at Erez on the border between Gaza and Israel, watched by two nervous security men.

Mr. Peres pulls a letter from Mr. Arafat out of his pocket and begins to complain:

"I want to say one thing. Mr. Chairman, about the letters. I suggest not to write letters. Because if you write,

we shall have to answer. We shall answer, we shall begin to complain. We shall say 'you didn't hand over to us the prisoners, you didn't do this and that,' which will kill the Palestinian story in the American Congress."

"Because if we shall write a letter like this, and it will reach the American press, it will be a catastrophe. And you know we are working today for the Palestinian cause in the American Congress more than you are. We are now working extremely hard to get approval of the \$500 million, to approve the loan. You must understand it," Mr. Peres said forcefully.

"Yes, yes, we know that," Mr. Arafat acknowledged, fumbling with a green plastic notepad.

"And for that reason, we don't answer publicly even,

because we don't want to embarrass the Palestinians. So my suggestion is leave out letters. Let's meet whenever you feel like it."

Mr. Moati told Reuters he could not believe his luck when he was allowed to film the exchange but he was sure it would be cut when he submitted the film as promised to Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat.

"To my surprise, nobody objected," he said. Most of the film was shot before Mr. Peres became prime minister last November following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by an extremist Israeli Jew.

Mr. Moati asked Mr. Peres in an interview what he thought of Mr. Arafat. "He's not a charismatic man nor is he physically impressive. But I noticed two things. One,

there is a certain warmth in his personality, whether you like it or not," Mr. Peres said.

"And then, he has two sorts of looks, of eyes. In the morning, they are almost closed like a blind person. His eyes are wide open in the evening because he works all night. Then he can be very impressive. He looks straight into your eyes."

"When I met him I was intrigued. I was looking for things that made this man strong or important. The record speaks for itself. It is Arafat who put the Palestinian question on the agenda of our time," he said.

Asked when he had first met Mr. Arafat, Mr. Peres hesitated a moment before saying: "When we signed the agreement in Washington (in September 1993)."